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OCEAN OF HEARTBREAK
Tracey Capstick waves goodbye to her sailor husband
PAGE 50

BEWARE: THEY COULD CULL YOUR CHILD
Libby Purves on a lesson in cynicism
PAGE 16

PLAY THE £50,000 GAME
See how your players are performing
PAGES 24, 25

Cash-for-questions lawyers pull out

Libel battle abandoned by Hamilton

By FRANCES GIBB, ANDREW PIERCE AND PHILIP WEBSTER

THE Conservative MP Neil Hamilton abandoned his "cash for questions" libel action against *The Guardian* at the last minute yesterday after his lawyers refused to continue acting for him.

The case, in which John Major and Michael Heseltine had been called as defence witnesses, was due to come to trial today. But the renowned libel lawyer Peter Carter-Ruck pulled out after discovering a "conflict of interest" between Mr Hamilton and his co-plaintiff Ian Greer.

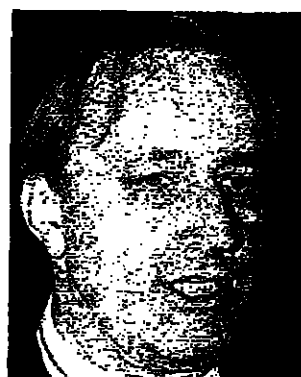
Both men engaged new lawyers, but after 48 hours of intensive negotiation, they decided yesterday to drop the case. They also agreed to contribute to *The Guardian's* costs in what the newspaper's editor, Alan Rusbridger, described as "one of the most astonishing legal cave-ins in the history of the law of libel".

Mr Rusbridger said that Mr Hamilton and Mr Greer, a political lobbyist, were making a "substantial contribution" to the paper's estimated £400,000 legal bill, although Mr Hamilton put the figure at "a nominal" £7,500.

Mr Carter-Ruck's firm, which had been working on behalf of both Mr Hamilton and Mr Greer for two years, decided on Friday that it could no longer act in the case after it received a detailed minute of a telephone conversation between Mr Hamilton and Mr Heseltine.

Mr Hamilton said that he had not. But the minute, taken by the Cabinet Secretary, Sir Robin Butler, was at odds with Mr Greer's version of events — one source close to the proceedings said last night "the difference was the same as the comparison between black and white" — and Mr Carter-Ruck's firm said that it could not continue with the case.

Mr Hamilton and Mr Greer, who face a £300,000 bill from Mr Carter-Ruck, last night insisted that they still believed that they had been libelled and that only the cost



Hamilton: case has cost him £150,000 so far

of fighting on had led them to settle. Mr Hamilton, who was forced to resign as a trade minister shortly after the telephone conversation with Mr Heseltine, said that he was devastated at having to withdraw.

Mr Hamilton had to get the law changed to enable him to bring the case in the first place and he said that he would not have done so, had he not been convinced of his innocence of *The Guardian's* charge that he accepted money from the Harrods owner Mohammed Al-Fayed to ask parliamentary questions.

Mr Greer, one of Westminster's best-known and most successful lobbyists, said: "I have had to take a sensible commercial decision on this. I am very disappointed that I am not able to go the whole way, but it is a rather expensive exercise. I totally refute that this decision to withdraw is an admission of the allegations made against me two years ago. This matter has gone on quite long enough and was fast turning into a media circus. I would want to continue on a matter of principle but I have had to take a sensible commercial decision and I am happy that a compromise has been reached."

But Mr Rusbridger said that Mr Hamilton and Mr Greer had "blustered about their innocence for two years" and then offered to drop their case minutes before the deadline. Mr Hamilton had "gone cap in hand to his fellow MPs to fund his action and, as

recently as three weeks ago, was vigorously promising to expose journalistic corruption and fantasy. Yet at the court room door both men have thrown in the towel and paid *The Guardian* a substantial contribution to its costs.

"The only possible explanation is that both Hamilton and Greer knew that the evidence *The Guardian* had compiled to defend the case would have blown his action out of the water and revealed a pattern of parliamentary sleaze more far-reaching than we had ever imagined."

"The *Guardian* has never doubted the truth of its original story and has refused to be deterred by the repeated attacks on our integrity by Mr Hamilton, Mr Greer and their colleagues."

"We would have produced utterly damning evidence of Mr Hamilton and Mr Greer's lack of integrity if the case had proceeded. No doubt that is why they dropped the action."

The *Guardian* had subpoenaed Mr Major, Mr Heseltine, Sir Robin and the former Chief Whip Richard Ryder to give evidence and all had said that they were willing to answer questions on any relevant issues. Had Mr Major appeared, he would have been the first serving Prime Minister to give evidence in court.

A spokesman for Mr Al Fayed said that he had expected to give evidence at the trial and had prepared to do so. He regretted not being able to tell the court about the treatment he alleges at the hands of politicians, which he describes as a "conspiracy".

He said: "He was very happy and very confident about giving evidence. He wanted to tell the judge and jury about the political conspiracy which had affected him over the past 10 years."

Last night's events cast a fresh shadow over Mr Hamilton's parliamentary career, although friends stressed that his constituency officers had been "superb" and "solid as a rock". Conservative Central Office said the case was a private matter between *The Guardian* and Mr Hamilton.



Harriet Harman: helped to NEC seat by Blair's grip on party and quotas for women

Forgiving faithful keep Harman on Labour NEC

By PHILIP WEBSTER

LABOUR yesterday forgave Harriet Harman for her decision to breach policy by sending her son to a grammar school and the subsequent embarrassment that caused Tony Blair.

In a move demonstrating both Mr Blair's grip on his party and the apparent readiness of Labour's new activists to cast off the old taboos, the Shadow Social Security Secretary was voted back on to the ruling national executive.

Ms Harman secured 58,000 votes, down 11,000 on last year. But this was a success that scarcely seemed possible earlier this year when the storm broke over her announcement that she was

sending her son to a selective grammar school in Bromley, Kent. Then, Labour MPs openly called for her to be sacked from the Shadow Cabinet, and she was saved only by a passionate appeal from Mr Blair to the Parliamentary Labour Party. He said he was refusing to hand a scalp to the Tories.

She was helped yesterday by party rules that discriminate in favour of women, requiring three of the seven NEC members chosen by the constituency parties to be female. Jack Straw, Shadow Home Secretary, and Ken Livingstone, the left-wing backbencher, each had more votes than Ms Harman but

failed to get elected to the executive because of their sex. Another high-pressure campaign from the leadership just protected Ms Harman when the Shadow Cabinet elections took place in July. She was re-elected in the last of the 19 elected places.

But it had been assumed that when party members had their say Ms Harman, a key modernising ally of Mr Blair, would be severely punished. Instead they backed Mr Blair and Ms Harman. She said: "I am absolutely delighted. It is tremendous support from the party... it has been a very difficult year and I feel I can absolutely put it all behind me now."

10p income tax would be aim of Brown's first Budget

By PHILIP WEBSTER, POLITICAL EDITOR

LABOUR intends to introduce a 10p or 15p bottom rate of income tax as soon as possible, Gordon Brown said yesterday as he set out his strategy to get rid of the poverty trap.

The first cut in the present 20p low rate would be a priority in Mr Brown's maiden Budget, providing the money is there, in what the Shadow Chancellor described as "a people's tax cut for jobs" that would help thousands back to work.

The Labour leadership also promised to reverse any cuts in inheritance or capital gains tax that Kenneth Clarke might make in the Budget next month, and to use the money to cut the bottom rate of income tax. Party officials declined, however, to give any other details of how the low rate could be financed.

Halving the existing 20p rate on earnings up to £3,900 would cost £8.7 billion, but in practice a new bottom rate would almost certainly apply to a much smaller income band. Mr Brown might raise some of the money through a new top rate of 50p for those earning more than £100,000 — something he is known to be considering — but Tony Blair is cautious about any tax rise.

The Labour leader is determined to distance the party from its tax-and-spend past and he will intensify his effort in his conference speech today. He will tell delegates: "Our task is not to stop people being successful but to help them and their families do better. That is the true radical meaning of the Labour party, new and old — not to hold people back, but to help them get on."

In his speech yesterday, Mr Brown highlighted the plight of more than 600,000 families caught in the poverty trap, where any pay rise was often wiped out by new taxes and



The spin's on full but nothing seems to be happening

INSIDE

A tale of two pictures: Peter Stothard joins delegates in Blackpool... page 16
Diaries of Alan... page 17
Diaries of Alan... page 17
Diaries of Alan... page 17

cuts in benefit. Rejecting suggestions that Labour was trying to outgun the Tories on tax, he said his plan was "to win a far more important battle — the battle against unemployment and poverty". His aides later said that Mr Brown's speech presaged a serious attempt to ensure that the benefit system never discouraged people from taking work, with the integration of the tax and benefit systems the ultimate, if longer term, goal.

The Conservatives, however, poured scorn on Mr Brown's claims. William Waldegrave, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, said the 10p rate would mean large tax increases elsewhere — "another example of Labour's age-old three-card trick."

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Taleban moves to crucial battle

The Taleban students' army pushed north with tanks and artillery, capturing new provinces. They now control more than two-thirds of the Afghanistan, but northern warlords are massing for a counter-attack. The worsening weather will be decisive... Pages 13, 17

Mubarak to miss peace summit

FROM MARTIN FLETCHER IN WASHINGTON

PRESIDENT Mubarak of Egypt yesterday refused to attend the emergency Middle East summit opening in Washington today despite personal entreaties by President Clinton and Yasser Arafat, the Palestinian Authority President.

The White House blamed a "scheduling conflict", but Egyptian officials said Mr Mubarak was angry at the headline attitude of Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel's Prime Minister, and did not believe the summit would be fruitful.

His decision dealt a serious blow to a summit designed to stop the bloodshed in the West Bank and Gaza. Mr Netanyahu and King Hussein of Jordan were due in Washington last night. Mr Arafat was expected very early this morning.

Netanyahu anger, page 12

Government cuts are forcing Britain's universities into debt

By DAVID CHARTER, EDUCATION CORRESPONDENT

MORE than half of Britain's universities, including Cambridge, will be in debt by 2000, vice-chancellors were told yesterday. The number of higher education institutions running at a loss has doubled in a year from 26 to 48 and looks likely to rise to 78 within four years.

The forecasts, by the Higher Education Funding Council, the government quango that distributes public money to universities and colleges, will increase the pressure on vice-chancellors to seek savings through redundancies and to introduce tuition charges.

Older universities among the casualties include Lancaster, which is planning redundancies and has cut spending to head off a predicted £5.8 million shortfall this year.

Universities blame much of their deteriorating financial position on a 31 per cent cut in government grants for equip-

ment and buildings. They also blame "efficiency gains", expected to come from staffing cuts, that were announced in last November's Budget. Real-term losses total £300 million this year and £550 million next year.

The Government said it expected universities to seek more funding from the private sector, but vice-chancellors said this was not likely to make up more than about £110 million of the losses. The squeeze has already led them to threaten a £300 entry levy for new students next year if the Chancellor does not restore the cuts this November.

Cambridge's grant for this year was down 4.5 per cent to £86.7 million and it believes inflationary pressures brought the total loss to 7 per cent. Professor Alec Broers, vice-chancellor at Cambridge, said: "If we go on as we are at

the moment, with future government funding as it is, we will go into the red by 2000 if we do not find new ways of funding."

A university in deficit, like a company running at a loss, would find it difficult to invest in key developments to maintain its standing. Professor Broers said he was already concerned that British universities could not afford to compete for top-calibre staff and equipment in such areas as micro-electronics.

The funding council paper, seen by *The Times*, does not name any of the country's 116 higher education institutions. It says a small number of institutions are comparatively wealthy, which helps to mask the overall picture of cuts faced by the majority. The paper expresses concern that several have "substantial" borrowings.

Trading in Eurotunnel suspended

By JONATHAN FREYNN TRANSPORT CORRESPONDENT

EUROTUNNEL shares were suspended at 112p yesterday "pending an announcement", raising hopes that the Channel Tunnel operator is close to a refinancing deal with banks.

The Anglo-French company, which has 135,000 British shareholders, is £9 billion in debt and the French courts have threatened to put it into receivership if it cannot reach terms with its creditors.

The deadline for two French-appointed mediators who have been trying to broker a deal ran out last night with no agreement in place. But City sources said the announcement of a settlement, giving the banks 49 per cent control of Eurotunnel in return for writing off up to £1.5 billion of debt, is likely within the next fortnight.

Eurotunnel saved, page 27

The Times on the Internet
http://www.the-times.co.uk



TV & RADIO 50, 51
WEATHER 26
CROSSWORDS 26, 52

LETTERS 17
OBITUARIES 19
PETER STOTHARD 16

ARTS 36-38
CHESS & BRIDGE 46
COURT & SOCIAL 18

SPORT 45-50, 52
BODY AND MIND 14
LAW 39, 41, 43

Confidante who predicted a tall, dark, handsome man gives details of alleged liaisons

Duchess may take legal action over intimate tapes

BY EMMA WILKINS

THE Duchess of York is considering legal action over tape recordings of conversations between herself and a self-styled clairvoyant in which she allegedly discusses her lovers, her money problems and her hope that the entire Royal Family will shortly drop dead.

The tape recordings of sessions in which she unburdened herself to Vasso Kortesios, a fortune teller and confidante of the Duchess for six years, were yesterday made available to callers to a premium-rate telephone line by the *Daily Mirror*.

Mrs Kortesios — who calls herself Madame Vasso — has published a book based on the private conversations which purport to reveal all about the

Duchess's colourful private life. It is the second time in a week that the Duchess has consulted her lawyers over a book. Last week she won an extension to a High Court injunction banning an American from revealing details of her affair with John Bryan, her former financial adviser.

Mrs Kortesios, who was born in Greece and now lives in Islington, north London, spent six years "counselling" the Duchess, and in recent years took the precaution of taping their sessions. The book and taped conversations, including a discussion between Mrs Kortesios and the Duke of York, are being promoted in the *Daily Mirror*. Its readers can dial a telephone number costing 39p a minute cheap

rate, or 49p at other times, and listen to a tape recording of the Duke telling Mrs Kortesios that he hopes to solve his marital problems.

The Duke, who was not aware that his remarks were being recorded, is "too busy" to take action against the newspaper but his advisers may consider writing to the Press Complaints Commission to complain, according to one royal aide.

Mrs Kortesios, who began her career charging £10 for a tarot card reading on a stall at Islington market, put her prices up to £50 soon after the Duchess's first visit to her house in 1989.

Mrs Kortesios's predictions include a suggestion that the Duchess will meet a stranger. He will be tall, dark and handsome, she promises.

The Duchess, who is aghast at the revelations concerning her sex life, sometimes telephoned Mrs Kortesios in the middle of the night asking her to gaze into the future and give her some advice. Legal action against Mrs Kortesios, her publisher John Blake and the *Daily Mirror* are being considered as options, friends of the Duchess said.

"It's been a very difficult day but Sarah is amazingly strong in the face of everything," one friend said.

The Duchess's case against a book written by Allan Starkie, a friend of John Bryan, is due to be heard at the High Court in London next week. The Duchess has already said she is prepared to give evidence to support her case that the book should be banned in Britain.

A spokesman for Buckingham Palace said: "These latest claims are a matter for the Duchess and her legal advisers. The Duke has a very busy job and doesn't want to get involved in the subject of old tape recordings."

During her conversations with Mrs Kortesios, the Duch-



The Duchess of York with her personal trainer at Wentworth Golf Club Health Centre, Surrey, yesterday. Friends said she was being "amazingly strong"

Giggles as the clairvoyant is told: 'I want the royals dead'

THE Duchess's alleged conversations with the fortune teller disclose an unhappy woman weighed down by family and financial worries. During one she asks Vasso Kortesios to tell her about the future health of the Royal Family.

She says: "I want to see deaths. I want to know what is happening."

Mrs Kortesios: "Which one do you want to die?"

The Duchess: "The whole lot."

Mrs Kortesios: "No, you're not like that."

The Duchess: "No, but there must be deaths around." (They giggle.)

The clairvoyant warns the Duchess that she is being used. The Duchess replies: "I don't give a s**t, to be honest with you. I'm so tired. I couldn't care less any more about anything. I'm just going to give up quietly now."

The Duchess adds that she feels stressed: "I feel like I've got a 10-tonne truck on my head. You're not pressure, though. You're wonderful. You're a relief from the pressure."

The Duchess goes on to describe the elements of her life causing stress. She refers to other members of her circle by number: Steve Wyatt, the American businessman, is Number 1; the Duke of York, Number 2; John Bryan, her financial adviser, Number 3; Diana, Princess of Wales is known as Blondie or D.

The Duchess says: "The pressure's too big for anyone to bear."

Mrs Kortesios: "Why, what's happened?"

The Duchess: "Nothing's happened. That's just it."

Mrs Kortesios: "Pressure from where?"

The Duchess: "Pressure from everywhere. Pressure from Number 3, pressure from money, pressure from the bank, pressure from life. Also, I'm waiting for something big to happen. You

know what we said? That Number 2's brother might not make it. Well, if that happened it might release me a bit."

Mrs Kortesios: "What do you mean? Your brother-in-law?"

The Duchess: "Yes, well, remember you said he might not be able to go on much longer. That was your message to Blondie, that he was going to have a problem, a big problem. Although we shouldn't mention it, that he might not go on for much longer in this life."

Mrs Kortesios: "How do you know?"

The Duchess: "Hah! Because she told me."

Mrs Kortesios: "Who?"

Duchess: "Blondie. She said she thinks that I told her that the reason you kept trying to get hold of her was to give her that message. She said, 'Well, that's amazing.'"

The Duchess adds that she is stressed: "I feel like I've got a 10-tonne truck on my head. You're not pressure, though. You're wonderful. You're a relief from the pressure."

The Duchess frequently talks about her financial troubles, referring to money as "the chips" or "potatoes".

At one point she says: "The chips, they're nowhere to be seen. It's really bad now."

The Duchess again: "I've been working flat out. The chips, the chips. They still aren't through..."

Later: "It's been five years now and my overdraft is up to £2 million."

Mrs Kortesios: "That's a telephone number."

In another conversation the Duchess talks about her father, Major Ronald Ferguson.

Mrs Kortesios: "I think he's a madman."

Duchess: "I think he is a madman, yes."

The Duchess talks of why her father published his life story: "He needs the money, so he had to sell his daughter, which I find just monstrous."



Vasso Kortesios — "Madame Vasso" — under the blue plastic pyramid designed to aid relaxation

Salvation Army gave £6m to 'poppcock' investment

BY MICHAEL HORSNELL

A FINANCIAL consultant was accused yesterday of plundering £1.2 million from naive officials at the Salvation Army to pay off debts and buy himself a house and car.

Stuart Ford, 45, a former soldier with no financial qualifications, persuaded the charity to invest £6.6 million in a "poppcock" scheme to buy and sell standby letters of credit, Southwark Crown Court was told. He "put his hands into the charity's pocket" after hopes of becoming a millionaire out of his dealings began to fade.

The jury was told the case that involved a "rather murky" Egyptian-born banker, secret dealings with an overseas bank, and "cast iron" promises of massive profits which the Salvation Army wanted to use to refurbish its string of hostels. The Army was described in court as naive to have trusted Mr Ford.

Mr Ford promised that the Army would double its money in a year, but not a single purchase was ever made. Jeremy Roberts, QC, for the prosecution, said of the deal: "It seems a bit too good to be true, but actually it was poppcock. It was poppcock. Mr Ford himself had been fed by other people who led him to believe this was a splendid scheme. There is no doubt he

believed in this himself and he in turn convinced the Salvation Army. It may be that they were rather naive to believe this. Maybe it was a pity they hadn't appointed somebody better qualified than Mr Ford to advise them on their investments."

Mr Ford, who set up the Birmingham-based financial consultancy of Tilen Securities, registered in Panama, pleads not guilty to 23 specimen charges of theft between August and December 1992.

Mr Roberts told the jury: "He had enormous debts he couldn't pay, several court judgments against him and he

was unable to meet his creditors. He was in imminent danger of being put out of business."

He was relying heavily on the success of the scheme to extricate himself. When neither trading nor profits materialised, he helped himself to the money.

Mr Roberts alleged that Mr Ford first misappropriated £800,000, which he used to pay off his existing debts and help himself to a better lifestyle. Later he took another £400,000 to make a loan to other clients without the knowledge of the Army for which he awarded himself an arrangement fee of £100,000.

"No doubt when he took the money for his own use he hoped to be able to put it back before the misappropriation was discovered," said Mr Roberts. "Unfortunately, as tends to happen when people do something like this, the truth came out before he had been able to put back any of the missing money." He added: "He was the sort of man for whom the big deal coming up was always just around the corner."

Mr Roberts said: "There are a lot of sharks and rogues in the financial world and it may be they saw Mr Ford and the Salvation Army coming. The trial continues."



Ford: his next deal was always round the corner

Loan turned down over pregnancy

BY CAROLINE MERRELL

THE Yorkshire Building Society has paid £4,000 in a sex discrimination claim because it refused to lend money to a pregnant woman. It paid £2,000 towards the costs of the case brought by the Equal Opportunities Commission.

Susan Marshall, a primary school teacher from London, applied for a mortgage with the Yorkshire at the beginning of last year. Mrs Marshall discovered she was pregnant while in the process of applying for the loan.

The society turned her down because it said it could not take into account her income while she was on maternity leave, despite her intention to return to work. Mrs Marshall and her husband eventually obtained funds from another lender but the Yorkshire's decision to turn down their application meant the Marshalls were unable to move into their new home before the baby was born, and Mrs Marshall was not able to have her baby in London as she had planned.

The Yorkshire said it was trying to operate a prudent lending policy, pointing out that circumstances may have caused Mrs Marshall not to return to work. The EOC said that according to its research, 90 per cent of women returned to work after maternity leave.

Eton to make killing in big game

BY JOHN SHAW AND ALAN HAMILTON

THE big game trophies, stuffed birds and dinosaur fossils that once fascinated generations of Eton schoolboys are about to be swept away as the college's natural history museum bows to the changed environment of the 1990s.

The head of a Bengal tiger, a pair of lions' heads mounted in glass cases, a stuffed sea eagle and a mounted gorilla are among exhibits to be auctioned later this month, and are expected to fetch up to £40,000.

Many of the animals were shot by Old Etonians who graduated to running the empire but retained a soft spot for their alma mater. The money will go towards refurbishing the museum, which was in danger of closing until Dr David Smith,

a retired Eton biology teacher, took over as its curator.

"Generations of Eton schoolboys have learnt their biology from the museum," Dr Smith said yesterday. "But in the past the emphasis of teaching was on anatomy, classification and the collecting of specimens. Now biology means genetics, ecology and evolution."

One of Eton's greatest big game shots, and the museum's most prominent benefactor, was A. E. Leatham, who left the school in the closing years of the nineteenth century, shot his way through most of the British empire, and published his memoirs under the title *Sport In Five Continents*. He sent the museum a giraffe from Africa, several rare red deer from New Zealand, various eland and impala, and a huge stuffed tarpon fish from Florida. Most of

Leatham's donations will be sold, but the museum is keeping his stuffed and mounted Ichang tufted deer, shot in a remote region of China in 1903 and the first example of its species ever to be shown in a western museum.

Began in 1850, the collection had become a time warp, virtually unchanged since it opened on its present site in the college grounds in 1889. Until recently the walls were hung with more than 300 big game trophies, and glass cases housed 160 stuffed birds and nearly 3,000 of their eggs.

The auction at Bonhams on October 23 is likely to prove popular with collectors. A Bengal tiger's head may be bought for less than £1,000, a pair of lions for £2,500, and a snow leopard in a glass case for about £3,000, according to catalogue estimates.

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Public Record Office lifts the veil on the role of some of Britain's suspected traitors

Wodehouse 'was not disloyal, but simply a vain fool'

By VALERIE ELLIOTT, WHITEHALL CORRESPONDENT

P.G. WODEHOUSE is portrayed as a vain fool rather than a traitor in secret government files released yesterday by the Public Record Office. The author, who lived in France and was interned by the Germans during the Second World War, aroused widespread ire for making five broadcasts for an American company at that time.

The broadcasts were largely innocuous, not strongly pro-German but containing whimsical descriptions of Wodehouse's internment. In one he referred to the Wehrmacht as "a fine body of men", a phrase frequently recalled by those seeking to prove he was pro-German but

which was, in the context, a facetious irony. George Orwell, writing in defence of Wodehouse, said the general thrust of the broadcasts had been that he "had not been ill-treated and bore no malice".

Wodehouse and his wife, Edith, lived in Le Touquet, northern France. They twice tried to escape the German advance (they were thwarted by broken-down vehicles) and remained as foreigners under observation during the German occupation. Wodehouse was subject to a 9pm curfew, but seems to have entertained senior German officers in his home.

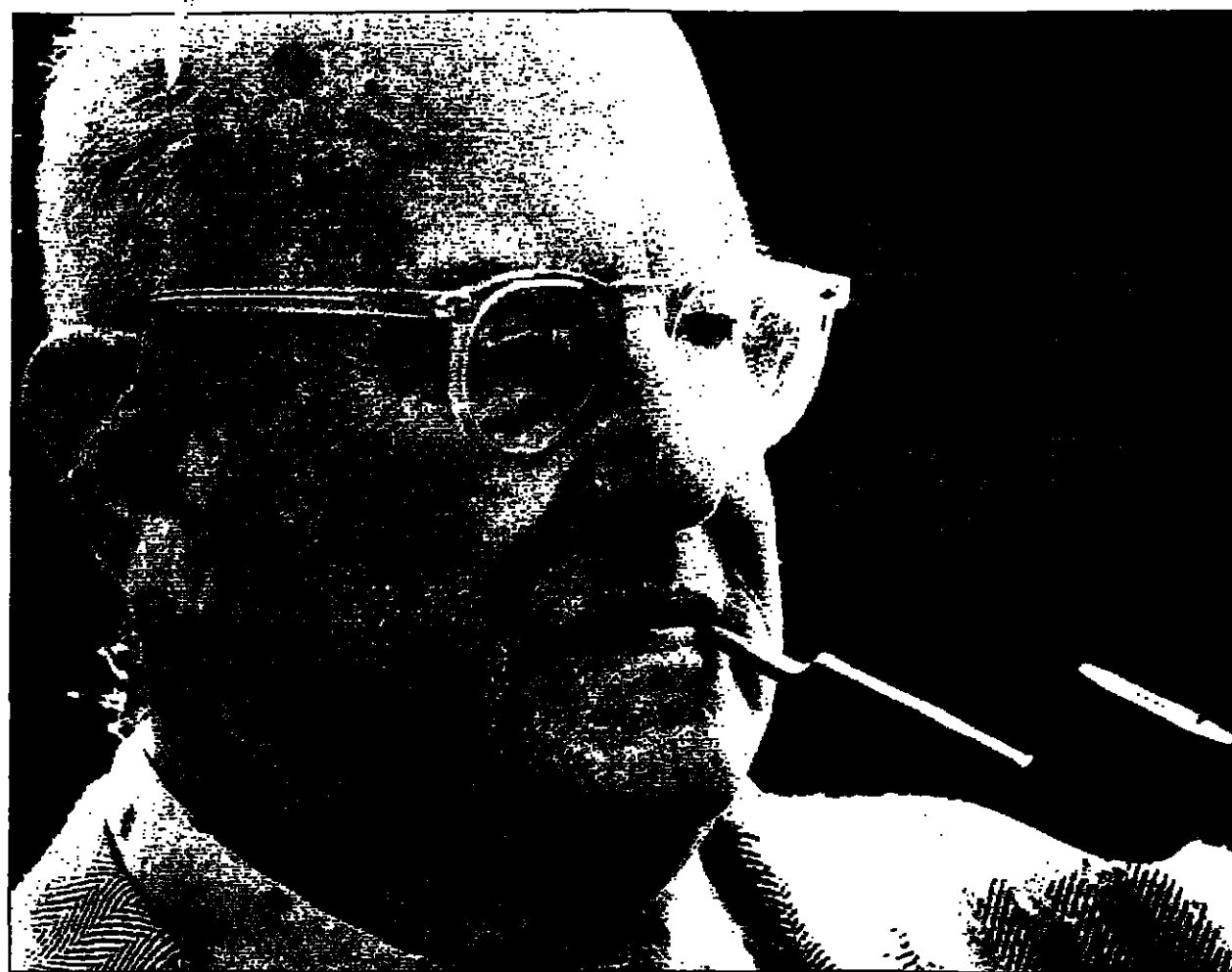
There is evidence from the documents that the Wode-

houses received frequent payments from German officials between 1941 and 1944. That seemed to be circumstantial evidence to brand Wodehouse a traitor but insufficient to ensure a conviction in a jury trial. Correspondence disclosed yesterday shows that government opinion was divided over the broadcasts from Germany and that ministers and the authorities conspired to keep the novelist from returning to Britain, fearing an embarrassing political backlash.

One official report to Herbert Morrison, the Home Secretary, described Wodehouse as "a silly ass and a selfish ass" but there seems no point in trying to charge such an ass with treason. The report described Wodehouse as a person "without a political sense, who lives in a world of his own, and is only interested in creating humorous characters and incidents to please himself and his book-buying public".

The broadcasts had provoked outrage in Britain and Wodehouse never returned after the war, living instead in America until his death in 1975 at the age of 93. He died 45 days after he was awarded a knighthood in the New Year Honours List in 1975. He became Sir Pelham Grenville Wodehouse in a largely symbolic gesture of reconciliation but died before the honour could be officially conferred.

When Wodehouse was released from internment before the end of the war there were fears that he might wish to return to England and wreak political havoc. But one senior official wrote: "If the rat has



Wodehouse insisted to MI5 that his broadcasts were to repay the kindness of American fans

enough intelligence to leave the sinking ship, I should suspect he must have enough intelligence not to put himself within the jaws of the British mastiff."

Wodehouse, however, is given a strong defence in the documents by Freddie Krauff, an Austrian prisoner-of-war in Britain, who said he had heard first hand the German plan for Wodehouse to be used for propaganda purposes. Even though the novelist had made five broadcasts, Krauff said he had refused to continue. "Mrs Wodehouse told me one day that her husband had broadcast in Germany and made a very bad impression in England. He had only been interested to give English listeners a description of life in an internment camp and had never thought that this might be taken as pro-German pro-

paganda. The moment she heard of these broadcasts she had begged him to stop at once."

On his release from internment the Wodehouses were put up at the sumptuous Hotel Bristol in Paris, which housed the diplomatic corps. Alfred Duff-Cooper, the newly arrived British ambassador to Paris, was so concerned about rubbing shoulders with the Wodehouses that he informed David Petrie, the head of MI5.

The generally low opinion of the Wodehouses emerged in particular during the formal MI5 investigation by Major E. J. P. Cussem, who concluded that Wodehouse was lacking in worldly wisdom. He summed up that Wodehouse was "very susceptible to any form of flattery".

Major Cussem believed Wodehouse had just made the

best of the opportunities that had been allowed him by the authorities. He had even been allowed a typewriter that had been rented for the purpose. It was an officer, Buchelt, who suggested that Wodehouse should broadcast to the Americans. The suggestion was followed up by Werner Plack, a German information ministry official who met Wodehouse at the Hotel Adlon in Berlin.

Harry W. Flannery, the US radio reporter, noted: "In making that proposal Plack showed he knew his man, he knew that Wodehouse made fun of the English and that he was still living in that period about which he wrote."

But Wodehouse insisted to MI5 that his broadcasts — for which he was paid 250 marks — were to repay the kindness of American fans. He told

Cussem: "I realised what a hideous mistake I had made and I have been trying for an opportunity ever since of putting myself right."

Cussem left the Wodehouses at the Hotel Bristol in the charge of Major Malcolm Muggersidge, of the Intelligence Corps, and urged Wodehouse to give no interviews.

MI5 knew the Germans paid the bills at the Hotel Bristol and were intrigued by sporadic payments to Mrs Wodehouse during 1944. She received 400,000 francs described as "special payment" or "travel expenses" in official German accounts. MI5 said they may have been legitimate but "it must be cleared up". There is no explanation for the payments in yesterday's secret files.

Leading article, page 17

Hammer not linked to killings

Tests on a hammer found near where Lin Russell and her daughter Megan, 6, were killed in Chillingham, Kent, have proved that it was not the murder weapon. The hammer was found near the spot where a bloodstained swimming bag belonging to Megan and her sister Josephine, 9, had been left. Police had been told where to look by villagers who said the site had been spelt out on a ouija board. Police believe it may have been a hoax.

Nurses to strike

Nurses, porters and other Union members at three London teaching hospitals have voted to strike over pay. The planned stoppages will affect the Middlesex, University College and Elizabeth Garrett Anderson hospitals.

Midwives' leader

A former nurse has been appointed general secretary of the Royal College of Midwives. Jamaican-born Karlene Davis, who has been deputy general secretary for the past two years, will take up her new post in the new year.

Piped aboard

Sir Angus Stirling, the former Director-General of the National Trust, will be chairman of a trust to run the Royal Naval College in Greenwich, southeast London. Admiral Sir Benjamin Bathurst will be a trustee.

Sam rescues jobs

Children's favourite Fireman Sam is taking 100 new jobs to a former pit village. His fictional Welsh home of Pontypandy is being brought to life in a £4 million theme park near Tonyrefail, Mid Glamorgan.

Loughlin funeral

Jodi Loughlin, 6, and her brother Tom, 4, who drowned on a Norfolk beach, were cremated after a funeral service at the church of St John the Evangelist near the family home in Upper Norwood, south London.

RAF drug jailing

An RAF technician, Simon Downs, 27, who admitted selling and possessing amphetamine and possessing cannabis at RAF Wittering, the Harrier base in Lincolnshire, was jailed for eight months by a court martial.

New departure

The British Museum has opened a shop in the departure lounge at Heathrow airport's terminal four. The shop, which will sell replicas of its exhibits, is the first to be opened by the museum outside its own precincts.

'Love affair' led to cell in the Tower

THE last man to be imprisoned in the Tower of London claimed to have developed pro-German sympathies after falling in love with a young German woman, but later said the story was made up.

In 1933 Norman Baillie-Stewart sold information to German agents for £90 and during the Second World War became the first person to make "Germany calling" broadcasts.

He committed the first treason while a lieutenant in the Seaforth Highlanders and was detained in the Tower, where visitors and other soldiers watched him exercising in full uniform, kill swinging as he marched. From there he was sent to

Maidstone prison. Baillie-Stewart refused to name his German contacts but letters from a Marie Louise were read out at his trial.

The released papers say that later he told his mother he had given the Germans useless information in an attempt to be hired by British Intelligence, and that Marie Louise was the code name of a male German agent.

After his release he went to Germany. During the Second World War he made the propaganda broadcasts, in which he was succeeded by William Joyce, who was subsequently executed. Baillie-Stewart was jailed for five years. He died in a Dublin bar in 1966.

Mysterious foreign donations funded Moseley's Black Shirts

By IAN MURRAY

SIR OSWALD MOSELEY'S Black Shirt movement was entirely funded from overseas, the papers released yesterday disclose.

Between 1934 and 1935, £164,000 in dollars and French and Swiss francs and German marks, was paid into an account opened at the Westminster Bank's Charing Cross branch in London by three of Moseley's close associates. The money was then transferred into the account of the British Union of Fascists and was sufficient to pay their entire expenses for the period.

The report of the four-day closed trial of Moseley after he was detained and interned in May 1940 shows that he refused to divulge where the money came from. The

account was discovered by Scotland Yard detectives.

George Churchill, secretary of the advisory committee for the Home Office, said in his report that "as leader responsible for policy, Moseley said he should refrain from acquiring knowledge of the sources from which his financial support came". Churchill was highly sceptical about Moseley's claim that the donations were anonymous. He felt that this "conspiracy of concealment" was part of an attempt by Moseley to pretend he owed nothing to foreign influences: he was aware that to attract British support he had to conceal such connections.

Support for Moseley was widespread and came from all social classes. A document shows the growing concern of Lord Tren-

chard, Metropolitan Police Commissioner, to see legislation which would stop the Black Shirts holding military-style rallies.

Some 28 meetings are listed, nearly all ending in violent clashes between Fascists and Communists. In Newcastle in 1934, one meeting ended when "both sides used pieces from the platform to hit each other". Lord Trenchard said Communists always attacked Fascists, never the other way round, but wearing black shirts was "abnormal provocation".

In 1934, MI5 was told to extend its operations to cover the Fascists and was given one officer and two clerks but insufficient money to begin surveillance for six months.

After Moseley's detention in May 1940, an anonymous letter delivered to Downing Street said: "Release

Moseley, and let Englishmen have a British peace that you and your Government could never give. You have been warned."

But as time went by, Moseley's support and health dwindled. In November 1941 he met his wife, Diana, who had been interned in Holloway at the same time as him. Their meeting in the High Court was in a libel action against the *Daily Mirror* for claiming that, as Fascists, they were given special treatment in prison. The *Mirror* conceded the case after Moseley complained that in Brixton prison he had to lie on planks infested with bugs and was unable to eat the food.

His failing health led Herbert Morrison, the Home Secretary, to agree to their release at the end of 1944. More petitions calling for

Moseley to be sent back to prison were sent than those that had called for him to be released. Morrison feared, however, that Moseley might die in prison and become a martyr.

When Special Branch surveillance of the couple ended they were living near Newbury in Berkshire. Moseley travelled into Newbury only to have his hair cut. The nearest communist branch was so far away that its members decided not to demonstrate because it was too far to walk.

After the war, Moseley began disseminating Fascist propaganda again but, in an answer in Parliament, Mr Morrison said that as long as he did not break the criminal law, there was no reason or way to stop him.



Moseley refused to divulge where money came from

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Lottery powers electronic campus for Highlands

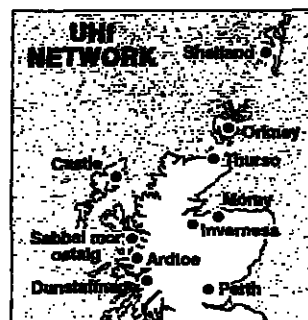
By SHIRLEY ENGLISH

A CENTURY-OLD plan to establish a University of the Highlands and Islands moved a step closer yesterday with the announcement of a £33.35 million grant — the biggest ever award for Scotland — from the Millennium Commission. The lottery grant means that the £86 million project now looks certain to proceed.

Val MacIver, chairman of the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) steering group, said: "This is an historic moment. The dream is a big step closer to becoming a reality."

Scotland's 14th university will be the first "electronic campus" of its kind in Britain, linking 11 existing colleges by computer and video conferencing. Recent economic studies predict that the university would boost the local economy — one of the poorest in Europe — by £70 million a year and create 800 jobs.

The idea for the university



was suggested more than 100 years ago and came closest to fruition in the 1960s during competition between Inverness and Stirling, which Stirling won.

The university will not have a centralised headquarters. Responsibility for administration is likely to be divided between 11 existing colleges, some of which lie as far as 450 miles apart.

It will serve an area larger than Belgium and Wales and encompassing one-sixth of Britain's land mass.

Video conferencing means that students in Shetland will

be able to take part in seminars in Argyll via TV and computer. The application for university status will be made early in the next century.

When the UHI eventually opens it will cater for 5,000 full-time higher education students drawn primarily from the locality, but also from elsewhere in Britain and abroad. It will offer a broad spectrum of degree courses but will capitalise on local strengths in environmental and cultural studies.

Highlands and Islands Enterprise, which is co-ordinating the project, is looking for investment from Europe, local authorities, the Government and the private sector to meet the remaining £56 million needed for the project. It estimates that the lottery money will trigger total investment of at least £100 million over the next five years, providing the UHI with high-tech communications facilities, libraries and major capital investment at each campus site.

'Daft' maths fools recruits

By DAVID CHARTER

SCHOOL-LEAVERS could not spot "daft" answers to sums because they relied too much on calculators, according to a survey of leading employers and their staff. Companies and employees will both call for better mental arithmetic training at school in the report for government curriculum advisers, due to be published next month.

The main concern of the 43 leading employers, including Sainsbury, NatWest and the

Army, was that recruits could no longer sensibly "guesstimate" answers to mathematical problems. They simply accepted solutions which were clearly wrong by a factor of ten or 100.

Employers said trigonometry and algebra had been a waste of time because they did not have real-life applications. They would far rather pupils spent their time practising mental calculations.

The School Curriculum and Assessment Authority, which commissioned the research

from the University of Exeter, said it discovered numeracy was down the list of employers' demands behind literacy and skills such as team-working and communication.

It said a number of measures were being introduced to tackle the issues, including more questions needing estimates and more non-calculator tests. For the first time next summer, schools will be able to volunteer for a 20-minute mental arithmetic test for 11 and 14-year-olds, which will become compulsory in 1998.

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LOW COST INTERNATIONAL CALLS

Widow seeks court backing to have baby by dead husband

By FRANCES GIBB, LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

A WOMAN who wants to have a baby using her dead husband's sperm, appealed yesterday to the High Court in London to overturn a decision of the High Court in London which refused her request.

In the first court action of its kind in Britain, the 30-year-old woman will go to the High Court in London tomorrow seeking permission to use the sperm for artificial insemination. The sperm was taken while her husband was in a coma on a life-support machine. One sample was taken when he was clinically dead.

The woman said yesterday that she and her husband had been trying to have a child when he contracted the bacterial meningitis that caused his death in March last year. "We had a life planned. We had decided exactly what we wanted," she told BBC Breakfast News. "I know what his feelings were. I lost my husband... But I didn't lose the ability to have his child. That is what I'm fighting for. I want the rest of my life back."

She has been refused permission by the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority because she does not have her husband's written consent, as required by law. Doctors had mixed views about the case with many expressing sympathy for the woman while saying that the law had to be adhered to.

Dr Stella Lowry, of the British Medical Association, said: "We understand completely that she has effectively got the consent of her husband. But we also recognise that the law was created to make sure that doctors make the right medical use of the new technologies available."

A mother's decision to defy doctors and not allow her baby to have a liver transplant would mean the child would die, a lawyer representing a health authority told the Court of Appeal yesterday. The mother is appealing against a ruling that she return to Britain with her baby for the operation. The hearing continues.

We welcome the opportunity for the courts to decide on the interpretation of the law."

John Parsons, consultant in charge of the assisted conception unit at King's College Hospital, London, was firmly opposed to the "macabre" idea. "There is no way of being sure that although the man wanted a child with his wife, he also wanted her to have their child after his death."

The woman, who is identified only by her initials, DB, is from the Midlands. She has taken out a second mortgage on her home to finance the legal case, which could cost her £80,000. She wants permission to be inseminated in Britain or permission for the sperm to be sent abroad. Doctors in Belgium and the United States have agreed to carry out the procedure. Her lawyers will argue in the High Court that she needs written permission only from a third party, not from her husband, for that sperm to be used for artificial insemination.

At her request, doctors at the Royal Hallamshire Hospital, Sheffield, took sperm from her 30-year-old husband while he was on a life-support machine. The sperm is being kept at Jessop Hospital for

Women, Sheffield. The woman is backed by Professor Ian Cooke, chairman of the department of obstetrics and gynaecology at Jessop Hospital. He said: "We would like to help the patient but we have got to obey the law. Yet the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act is couched in fairly general principles. It aimed to envisage future situations when it became law in 1990, but it is always difficult to predict every clinical situation."

The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority, said that written consent was a fundamental requirement in law for the storage, and use, of a man's gametes after his death. "The written consent can only be obtained after the donor has had suitable opportunity to receive proper counselling, including consideration of the welfare of any child that may be born."

Letters, page 17



Filming begins on the set of *The Borrowers* in Berkshire, as the Fifties book becomes an expensive movie

Borrowers find £20m for big adventure

By DALYA ALBERGE

FILMING began yesterday on a lavish £20 million cinema production of *The Borrowers*, the 1950s children's book about four-inch people who live under the floorboards of an old house inhabited by full-size human beings. It is claimed to be the most expensive family film made in this country by a British company since *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, almost 30 years ago.

The movie, which got under way in Theale, Berkshire, is being produced by a British company, Working Title, whose successes include *Four Weddings and a Funeral* and



Mark Williams, left, and John Goodman on set

Dead Man Walking. It was inspired by the company's successful television production starring Ian Holm and Penelope Wilton.

Tim Bevan, the co-founder of Working Title, the London-

based production arm of PolyGram Filmed Entertainment, which has provided the cash, said: "This would not have happened even two or three years ago. There is a healthier climate now." The

film-makers promise "truly sensational visual effects and awe-inspiring sets". Props include 15-inch paper-clips and a ten-foot-tall toaster. For 17 weeks, they will be filming at Shepperton Studios, Middlesex, where 15 sets include a gargantuan kitchen and a whole house beneath the floorboards.

The film of the book, by Mary Norton, will star John Goodman, best-known for roles in *Roseanne* and *The Flintstones*, as a villainous lawyer and Jim Broadbent, who appeared in Woody Allen's *Bullets Over Broadway*, as the miniature father.

Arts, pages 36-39

Telephone sex pest jailed for five years

A MAN who threatened to kill a middle-aged woman in obscene telephone calls, was jailed yesterday for five years.

David Smith, 50, of Lees, Oldham, was convicted yesterday of making threats to kill the woman, from Birkenhead.

In numerous calls recorded by police he threatened to tie her to a bed in a sound-proof cellar at his flat and perform degrading sexual acts upon her. Passing sentence yesterday, Judge Burke said: "This programme of lingering death would have stretched the fantasies of any Gestapo interrogator."

The court was told that Smith had a history of persecuting women. He was first fined for making obscene telephone calls in 1970. His mail and telephone calls will be monitored in prison.

At last, the joints are jumping, says Good Food Guide

By ROBIN YOUNG

THERE has never been a more exciting time to dine out, according to the new edition of *The Good Food Guide*, published today. After four and a half decades of bellyaching about lamentable national standards of cuisine and service, the book is suddenly full of praise.

Jim Ainsworth, the guide's editor, writes in his foreword: "Restaurants in Britain are doing nothing short of a grand job... At long last this country really gets a buzz from eating out and at long last we have restaurants to cherish and be proud of on a scale never before experienced." Mr Ainsworth says that one of the guide's former editors told him: "I wish I had had the restaurants [to review] like you've got."

London is a "destination city" attracting diners from all over Britain and abroad and other city centres such as Leeds and Edinburgh are "also jumping". Mr Ainsworth says, "Some of the best chefs around the regions are setting up a cafe here, a bistro

there, and installing trusted sous-chefs to look after them. The food in most of these places turns out to be exciting and high quality."

Restaurant owners in Leeds, which has six establishments in the guide, yesterday suggested reasons for their success. Jeff Baker, the chef for two of them, Brasserie Forty Four and Pool Court at 42, said: "I worked in London for nine years and there is no doubt Leeds is getting more like London every day. We have a lot of accountants, solicitors and other professional people here, and that helps."

Simon Gueller, the chef-proprietor of Rascasse, specialising in Mediterranean cuisine, said: "The people are not conservative. They welcome innovations and experiment."

The Good Food Guide says that not only are national standards high but "the experience and fun in both kitchen and dining room strikes home". There is a "wonderful mix of cooking styles", some representing a pure national or regional culinary heritage while "others borrow ideas and ingredients from wherever the chef fancies".

There are still minor causes for dissatisfaction. Newly fashionable big restaurants, Mr Ainsworth complains, have not mastered a booking system and some have waiters hovering offensively to "sweep diners out of the door", as quickly as possible so that more customers can be seated. Smoking is a source of "frustration and division", waiters know too little about the ingredients of dishes to guard against risks of allergies, wine prices are often unjustifiably marked up and some out-of-date and inequally administered dress codes, particularly about men having to wear ties, are applied.

There are comparatively few changes in the guide's ratings for recommended restaurants. The most notable is the promotion of Marco Pierre White's The Restaurant at the Hyde Park Hotel in Knightsbridge, central London, to a top mark of five.

The four other establishments sharing that honour are unchanged: Chez Nico at Ninety Park Lane, in Mayfair; La Tante Claire in Chelsea; Le Manoir aux Quat Saisons in Great Milton, Oxfordshire; and Atraharrie Inn at Ullapool, Highland.

□ *The Good Food Guide 1997* (Which? Ltd. £14.99).

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So be ready for a change for the better. For everybody.

'No room for boardroom excesses' in Shadow Chancellor's hard-headed, costed plans

Brown declares his aim of a 'people's tax cut'

By JILL SHERMAN AND ALICE THOMSON

A STARTING rate of tax of 10p and an easing of poverty traps for the low paid are his aims as Chancellor, Gordon Brown announced yesterday.

In an impassioned speech that earned him a standing ovation, the Shadow Chancellor made clear that millionaires would not be able to exploit tax loopholes and the privatised utilities would have to pay a windfall tax.

He made clear that he had no intention of imposing penal tax rates on the wealthy but would use any available resources to help the poorest groups by introducing a lower rate of tax and ensuring that those on benefit did not pay excessive marginal tax rates.

In his keynote conference speech Mr Brown declared: "My tax-cutting ambition is to lower the starting rate of tax to 10p or even 5p, to help everyone. While the Tories want a millionaires' tax cut for themselves, I want a people's tax cut for jobs — one that will help thousands back to work."

In a speech designed to underline his determination to be tough on public spending Mr Brown also reassured delegates that he was not abandoning the party's socialist bedrock. "This is not a choice between morality and economics, between principles and realism, between prosper-

ity and social justice, between head and heart. I don't want this party to stop dreaming dreams, to water down our idealism or discard our vision."

He said there would be "no room for boardroom excesses, no room for monopolies and cartels, no place for City cliques". But he gave warning that there could be "no quick fixes, no easy options, no magic-wand solutions by cooking the books or juggling the figures" in tackling Britain's economic problems. The only way ahead was through costed, hard-headed and radical policies for stability, employment and educational opportunity.

Mr Brown also put up a robust defence of his decision to cut child benefit for 16 to 18-year-olds and target the money on teenagers in poorer families. "Only half the mothers of teenagers after 16 receive child benefit and I cannot justify the wife of a millionaire receiving child benefit for a teenager over 16 when the mother of an unemployed teenager does not and a total of one million mothers do not," he said.

"There has never been universal child benefit after 16. But universal education — properly financed for all after 16 for the first time — there



must be and will be and it is now within our grasp."

Most delegates toed the unity line in the debate, but John Edmonds, general secretary of the GMB general union, was one of the few to give an old Labour tub-thumping speech. "I am fed up with company directors who refuse our members a decent level of pay and then award themselves the sort of money that most people never see in a lifetime," he said. To cheers he added: "Under £4 an hour for the people at the bottom and over £400,000 a year for people at the top is no way to run an economy."

Steve Stevenson, from the Transport and General Workers' Union, introduced a motion calling on a Labour government to renationalise the gas, electricity, water and railway industries. The public want to see the basic indus-

tries... back in public ownership," he said.

Christine Shawcroft of the CRS London Political Committee, said Labour was now tough on crime and added: "The best way of being tough on crime is, I think, by making sure stolen property is returned to its rightful owners — starting with privatisation."

□ The Labour leadership last night avoided a potentially damaging row when delegates at the party conference backed a move to improve workers' rights.

Unions had been pushing for the new rights against unfair dismissal to apply to workers from their first day in a new job. However, a motion that would have been fiercely opposed by employers was toned down by the Labour leadership so that it was ambiguous about when the rights will apply.

The motion said: "These rights will apply to all employees regardless of hours worked, length of service or form of contract."

While unions said this meant the rights would apply immediately, leadership sources said the current two-year waiting period would remain until the House of Lords reports on the issue.

Peter Stothard, page 16
Leading article and
Letters, page 17



New rate could cost £8.7bn

By JILL SHERMAN

LABOUR'S plans to introduce a new starting rate of tax at 10p could cost as much as £8.7 billion according to Treasury figures. Even its more moderate ambition to cut tax to 15p would cost £4.35 billion if this were applied to the first £3,900 earned, as applies at present to the 20p band.

But Labour aides were anxious to point out that Gordon Brown has made no decision about how wide the band would be or whether the rate would be introduced by gradually dropping the 20p band in 1p stages.

The initial costs would be reduced considerably if the £3,900 band were reduced, which is likely, or if the new rate were phased in over several years. If both were done together the costs would be even less.

Mr Brown's aides claim that the whole package could be afforded at a stroke if the Tories abolished inheritance tax and capital gains tax. The former would raise £3 billion while the latter would raise £1.5 billion. They concede that this is unlikely to be done overnight, if it is mentioned at all in the November Budget.

If Mr Clarke makes no such proposals, Mr Brown will have to look to other measures to raise the money. One option is to set a new 50p rate of tax for those earning over £100,000. But this will raise only £1 billion which would have little impact on helping the poorer workers.

Other options include lowering the thresholds for those paying the 40p rate of tax. But this is highly unlikely as it would penalise the Middle England voters whom Tony Blair is most keen to attract. Another choice would be to reduce a range of tax allowances for the very wealthy.

Mr Brown has already earmarked the £3 billion windfall tax from privatised utilities to spend on programmes to get young people off benefit into work. But his aides have hinted that he may try to levy the windfall tax on more utilities than water and electricity, which could bring in considerably higher sums.

Opposition candour replaced by government caution

Gordon Brown already behaves as if he is Chancellor, while Kenneth Clarke increasingly talks like a Shadow Chancellor. Mr Brown emphasises the need for "iron discipline" on public spending and every nuance of his speech yesterday was studied as a guide to what he may do in office.

By contrast, Mr Clarke talks candidly and freely about the difficulty of tax cuts as if he were a detached commentator without the constraints of office. That is what has made Mr Clarke the most interesting politician of the conference season.

The contrast brings out the unusual atmosphere of the Labour conference — unusual for a party

that has become so accustomed to opposition. But, now, all the talk is of Operation Victory with fringe meetings about preparing for government. Party leaders warn about the dangers of hubris. But almost everyone at the conference believes that Labour will be in power next May, and is behaving accordingly.

Yesterday Mr Brown married radicalism with financial respectability, putting "new" Labour views in "old" Labour rhetoric. It was a skilful performance, a hint of what might have been if he had become Labour leader two years ago.

He offered that uplift and sense of direction that party activists complain is lacking in "new" Labour. He promised far-reaching



programmes on job creation, skills training, reform of the tax and benefit system and the minimum wage. He offered a persuasive case for redirecting the resources currently spent on child benefit for some 16 to 18-year-olds to help to support universal education and training for all after 16.

There was a hint of Harold Wilson's denunciations of "old school tie" attitudes in Mr Brown's promise that "in the new Britain, under Labour, there will be no room for boardroom excesses which waste national resources, no room for monopolies and cartels

which restrict competition, no place for City cliques". This was all rooted in sober promises of "No quick fixes. No easy options. No magic wand solutions by cooking the books, or juggling the figures. No unsustainable dashes for growth. No wish list spending solutions."

But there was an element of smoke and mirrors. This was perhaps not the occasion for discussion of Labour's commitment to the golden rule limiting public spending and for clarification of whether or how the top rate of tax will be raised. But these questions have to be answered at some stage. Meanwhile, promising a starting tax rate of 10p or 15p again exposes Labour to Tory attacks. It is a

largely empty promise for Labour to hint at raising money by reversing any cut in capital gains or inheritance taxes announced in the November Budget. These measures would take a long time to work through, so little money would be available in the short term.

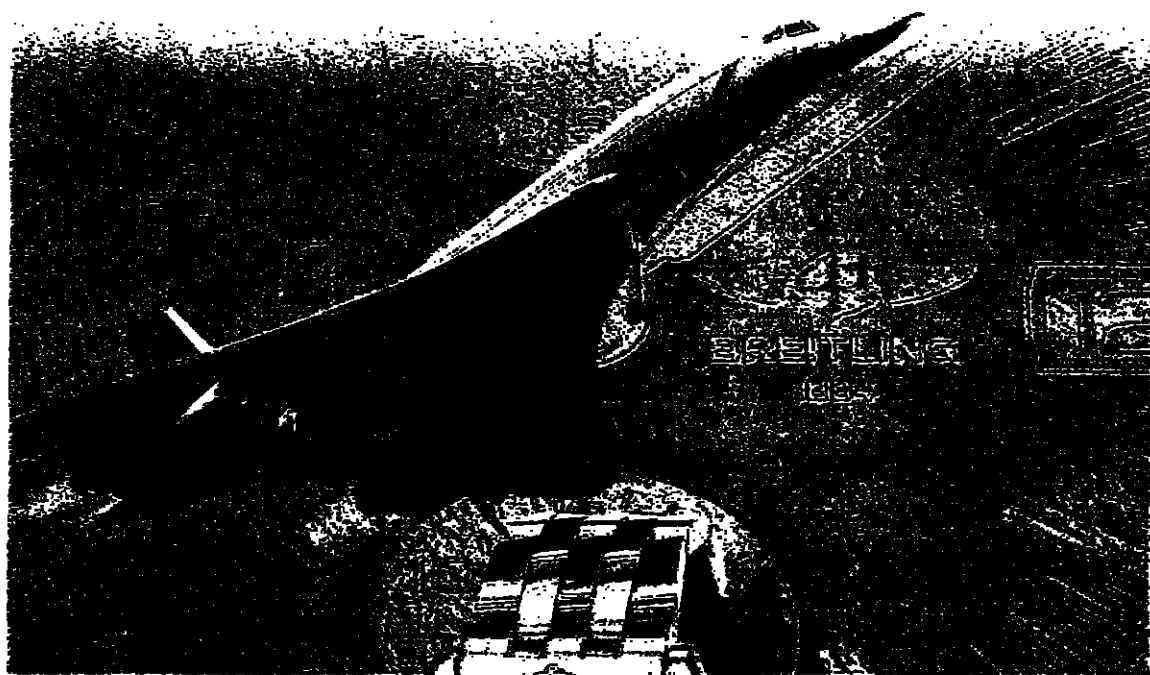
The main weakness of Mr Brown's speech was his failure to address the deterioration in public finances and how this will inevitably constrain his freedom of manoeuvre if he becomes Chancellor. Will taxes have to be raised, and spending plans trimmed after the election? Half an answer has come from the ever candid Mr Clarke.

In his GMTV interview on Sunday, Mr Clarke warned

against "frothy" tax cuts which might not be sustainable and anyway were not required to win the election. Far from being a gaffe or mistake, he was only speaking the truth when he said that, in view of the Government's record on taxes, the public would look "twice" at tax cuts from this Government and will only accept them if they can see they fit in with a sensible strategy that's going to make them better off for some years to come. That also applies to spending promises. But then Mr Brown has discarded the candour of opposition for the caution and evasions of government — even if still in waiting.

PETER RIDDELL

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CONFERENCE IN BRIEF

Foreign companies 'no threat to media'

Britain should not be afraid of foreign companies owning parts of the media, Labour supporters were told yesterday. Les Hinton, executive chairman of News International, which owns Times Newspapers Holdings, and a director of the Press Association, told a fringe meeting that increased competition in the market, not regulation, would "drive the new proliferation of media".

He emphasised that, with the exception of the BBC, no single media group commanded more than seven per cent of the time Britons spent with their media. News International products took up about 3.5 per cent, he said. "We must not be afraid of visitors from abroad and we must look across the world for new markets."

Ferguson visit

Alex Ferguson, the manager of Manchester United and a Labour supporter, will attend a fringe meeting chaired by Jack Cunningham, the Shadow National Heritage Secretary, to discuss Labour's new charter for football.

Policy plea

Labour activists called on Tony Blair to give ordinary members a greater say in how policy is formulated. Linda McAvan, vice-chairwoman of Labour Reform, said many delegates felt policy was dominated by a sterile debate between Mr Blair's inner circle and left-wingers who did not want any change.

Today's business

Morning: Clare Short, spokeswoman for Overseas Affairs, platform speech on women's issues; Robin Cook, Shadow Foreign Secretary, speech on Europe. Afternoon: Tony Blair's main conference speech. Main fringe meetings: Tribune rally with Gordon Brown, Robin Cook and Baroness Castle of Blackburn.

Raising taxes is a vote winner, says Hattersley

By JAMES LANDALE
POLITICAL REPORTER

Hattersley: services must be improved

A PROMISE of tax increases to pay for public services would win votes for Labour, Roy Hattersley said yesterday.

The former deputy leader urged Tony Blair to remain true to the party's egalitarian traditions. He said that Labour had lost the last general election because it failed to win the voters' trust.

"The British people would have voted for tax increases to improve services," he said. "Now the competence of the leadership is undoubted. I believe that services are in such a desperate need of improvement that were we to see a hypothecated increase in taxes, there would be a real enthusiasm for bringing it about."

Speaking at a meeting of Labour Reform, a group of activists calling for greater involvement of party members in policymaking, Mr Hattersley also warned Mr

Blair that Labour would not survive more than one term in government unless it maintained a core belief in social equality. He said that a party should change its policies with the times, but not its principles.

"If you have an organisation based on a core belief, you cleave to the central principle and you adjust your policies to the principle and the prevail-

ing circumstances," he said. "It is very important that the party should have that central core which keeps us together and keeps us in one piece."

Mr Hattersley argued that party activists needed some substantial policies and ideology to try to sell to the electorate on the doorstep. "I don't believe you will go out in the rain for fiscal probity," he said, referring to the mantra repeated constantly by Gordon Brown, the Shadow Chancellor. "But you will go out in the rain for a more equal society."

Labour should have the confidence to sell an idea of social justice and equality, rather than just low taxes. Quoting Gladstone, he said that voters were not simply after "the fructification of the florin in their pocket". He said: "I do not believe that that is all the people want, and I believe politicians underestimate the people if they pander to that view."

The show goes on for Harriet, new Labour's super trouser

By ALICE THOMSON
POLITICAL REPORTER

HARRIET HARMAN yesterday faced with aplomb one of the most nerve-racking 24 hours of her political life. Not only was she in charge of the most controversial issue of the conference, pensions, but she knew that at 5pm she could face the public humiliation of being thrown off the National Executive Committee.

The Shadow Social Security Secretary was up at 5am, reading newspaper forecasts of her demise, before being briefed in her room by her two aides about damage limitation. Having dressed in a maroon trouser suit,

she went down to the lobby of the Imperial Hotel at 6am where she was met by glancing camera lights.

Forget Cherie Booth and Barbara Castle. Ms Harman was the woman of the day. Everyone wanted to know whether she was worried about the afternoon's NEC election results. Did she think Tony Blair would come to her rescue again as he had when she decided to send her child to an opt-out grammar school? And was she seething at the octogenarian Baroness Castle of Blackburn for opposing her on pensions?

Ms Harman had had only four hours' sleep. The previous evening had been spent buttering up delegates before heading off for

the New Statesman party, where she stayed until 130am.

Only three other MPs were doing the media rounds while it was still dark outside, the rebels Ken Livingstone, Jeremy Corbyn and Diane Abbott. The shadow minister toyed nervously with her pensions crib sheets as she entered the media ring. Her first interview was with BBC Radio's *Good Morning Scotland*. Tucked in beside a bellowing Big Breakfast producer and TalkBack Radio, she tried to concentrate on the tricky pension question while those around her discussed the sexist MPs in Westminster.

GMTV was filming her so she could not even take a slurp of

coffee. As she finished, she just had time to say to her aide, "I can't do any more TV before I put some make-up on," before being whisked into the portable building that is home to Radio 4's *Today*. She stumbled a little as she talked about caring for the poorest pensioners but didn't make a gaffe. When James Naughtie, the presenter, asked if she thought that she would keep her position on the NEC, she smiled sweetly: "You will just have to contain your enthusiasm until 5pm, Jim."

Half an hour later Gordon Brown had emerged to talk about tax. Mr Brown got away with a crumpled suit and stained tie; Ms

Harman knew that she had to look immaculate. She just had time to put on her make-up before the BBC and ITV crews captured her in a pincer movement. They wanted to know whether she minded being the least popular MP along with Virginia Bottomley, according to a *Sunday Times* survey. Ms Harman ignored the question.

By 8am grey spin-doctors had emerged blinking into the light but Ms Harman, buoyed by her head-start, did not need them. Nor was their advice from her husband, the trade unionist Jack Dromey, who was in London with the children. Instead she had breakfast with her second-in-com-

mand, Henry McLeish, and the new, svelte Mr Brown, and darted around between spoonfuls of muesli talking to the press.

She made sure she was seen beaming on stage for the opening of the conference before disappearing to talk to former miners from the Rhondda Valley. "I always thought Harriet was a stuck-up, vacuous middle-class do-gooder, but she has got real guts," one said.

While Baroness Castle held a glamorous fringe conference, with champagne, to restate her opposition to any compromise over pensions, Ms Harman talked to pensioners from Age Concern and ate vegetarian sandwiches. She

went to support Mr Brown while he delivered his speech before going away to write her own. At 4pm she went into more talks about pensions with unions.

At 5pm she went alone to hear the NEC results, emerging triumphant half an hour later. She had got in — and with more votes than Ms Abbott. Her enemies said it was only because of the women's quota, but she didn't care. There was another fringe event to address, followed by a dinner with journalists, three more television interviews and parties. Her final showdown with Baroness Castle on pensions wasn't for another 48 hours. Ms Harman had time to enjoy her victory.

Smith promises to end waiting for cancer surgery

By ARTHUR LEATHLEY
POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

LABOUR pledged yesterday to ensure that no cancer patient would be made to wait more than a fortnight for surgery.

The promise forms the foundation of a £100-million plan to cut overall waiting lists and is intended to be implemented within the first year of a Labour government.

Chris Smith, the Shadow Health Secretary, told delegates that the decision would benefit 137,000 people, some of whom wait eight months for surgery, and would cost up to £40 million. He said that the cost would be met by savings on "unnecessary and expensive bureaucracy".

Although the announcement was broadly welcomed by doctors, cancer campaign groups cast doubt on Labour's ability to cut waiting lists so quickly. They said that it could take several years to introduce "immediate" surgery, considered to be within two weeks. It was pointed out that the vast majority of cancer patients already undergo surgery within a month of diagnosis.

Mr Smith said that Labour would investigate the possibility of using smaller hospitals, possibly including community and disused cottage hospitals,

Chris Smith provoked laughter when he ridiculed a health trust memorandum that advised managers on the correct use of chairs. He told delegates: "Under the heading of Immediate Action, it says: 'Managers and staff are advised to ensure that all chairs and stools are used solely for their intended purpose and in the correct manner.' The memo, he claimed, was part of the "explosion of unnecessary bureaucracy".

to give better post-operative care. He accused health service managers of forcing patients out of hospital too early, leading to unnecessary readmissions. He also announced plans to consult employers and trade unions on ways of improving health at work.

The Shadow Health Secretary underlined his credentials as a senior left-winger. Only 24 hours after Robin Cook, the Shadow Foreign Secretary, urged Tony Blair to address the issue of poverty, Mr Smith also strayed slightly beyond his health brief to take up the issue.

"As Tony Blair has said, if after five years of a Labour Government we have not succeeded in rolling back the tide of poverty then we might as

well pack up our bags as a political party and go home. Tackling poverty is part and parcel of what we believe in as a party. And it's part of what brought me into this movement in the first place. And it's why our pledge on ending the nightmare of unemployment for our young people is so important."

Labour's plans to end cancer waiting lists marked a shift away from past pledges to help patients who have waited longest and instead concentrate resources on those in greatest need of surgery. James Johnson, chairman of the British Medical Association's consultants' committee, said: "The idea of differential waiting list targets, depending on the urgency of the condition, seems to be a far more sophisticated way of dealing with the problems of long waiting lists."

However, David Skidmore, a cancer consultant from Dartford, Kent, accused Mr Smith of being "deceived by figures" and failing to research the background. Many cancer patients are in fact waiting for a second phase of surgery, such as plastic surgery, and are no longer suffering from cancer. In any case, it does not necessarily help to rush into surgery in the way that seems to be suggested.



Be prepared: a draft manifesto awaited every delegate yesterday

Leader's allies win seats in NEC elections

By ANDREW PIERCE, POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

TWO allies of Tony Blair were elected to the National Executive Committee in a result which is seen as a further boost for his leadership.

In the women's section, Hilary Armstrong, the Shadow Environment Minister, took the seat vacated by Joan Lester, the veteran left-winger, who is retiring at the general election. Ian McCartney, the party's employment spokesman, comfortably won the nomination of the Socialist Societies section.

Mr McCartney said he saw his success in getting onto the NEC for the first time as a victory for the campaign he has run against the so-called "fat cat" executives.

However, Ken Livingstone and Jack Straw, the Shadow Home Secretary, were denied places despite polling more votes in the constituency section than Harriet Harman. She won a place because of the quota rule which guarantees a place for three women; the other women elected were Diane Abbott and Marjorie Mowlem.

Robin Cook, the Shadow Foreign Secretary, was first in the constituency section for the second year running with a 25 per cent increase in his vote. David Blunkett replaced Gordon Brown in second place and the Shadow Chancellor slipped to third. Labour officials

were delighted with the outcome. "It is a great result for the leadership. The NEC is much stronger."

"Harriet Harman beat Diane Abbott and the two are closer to the leadership than their predecessors," said an official.

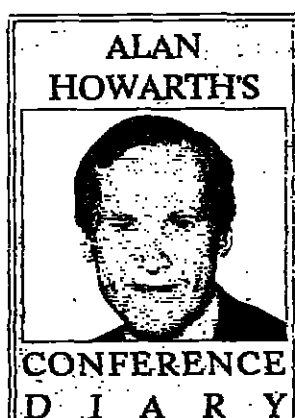
□ In the constituency section the following seven members were elected by a postal ballot: Robin Cook: 109,801 (poll: 85,670 last year); David Blunkett: 94,096 (75,984); Gordon Brown: 93,679 (79,371); Dennis Skinner: 73,391 (64,288); Marjorie Mowlem: 68,271 (53,578); Harriet Harman: 58,112 (69,029); Diane Abbott: 54,800 (45,653). Those not elected were: Jack Straw: 64,547 (58,486); Ken Livingstone: 58,593 (53,423).



Livingstone: polled more votes than Ms Harman

A new world of democracy, better suits and more drink

A year ago Alan Howarth, MP for Stratford-on-Avon, left the Tory party to join Labour. In the first of a series, he reports his impressions of his first Labour conference



ALAN HOWARTH'S CONFERENCE DIARY

Labour's conference is longer, more complicated and much more waywardly democratic than the Tories'. At the end of 24 hours at my first Labour Conference I have to say that I am bemused by both the procedures and the politics.

What does strike me is the depth of ethical commitment and thoughtfulness. There is also a range of expertise that it is unlikely would be in evidence at a Tory debate. One man, 40 years in the Salvation Army, and 30 years a social worker, was followed by a midwife, a speech therapist, an ophthalmologist and two GPs.

Another speaker said: "I am proud to be in the party of compassion." So am I.

My initiation to conference was fitting for a former higher education minister. At the Labour students' reception at the Imperial Hotel on Sunday evening I was supplied with lager by an extremely beautiful girl and informed by a young media veteran

that Labour proceedings are even more liberally lubricated by alcohol. New Labour students certainly wear better suits.

I was lobbied by the British Entertainment and Discotheque Association, sponsors of the event, who want the party to legalise Sunday dancing. I said I would support the case providing it was not made compulsory.

A model short speech by Labour student Lizzie Watkins expressed the genuine warmth of support for Tony Blair that was felt in the room. Left Labour students should be suspected of sycophancy I am pleased also to report overhearing someone wondering out loud whether, once Jack Straw has brought in his curfew, it will be possible any longer to proceed from disco to disco at conference.

I joined crowds of delegates who funnelled out of the side entrance of the Winter Gardens to travel back down Coronation Street to hear Jack Jones and Peter

Townsend address a fringe meeting on 'Pensioners Out Of Poverty' in the boardroom of the Blackpool Hotel and Guest Association.

As the organiser kept plaintively repeating, the event was organised in March when it was assumed not many people were interested in pensions.

It was a very crowded, very hot and somewhat grumpy meeting, from which many were turned away. Many others, including myself, had to strain to hear. Jack Jones was introduced as the patron saint of pensioners. Jack reminded us that you don't get to be a saint without a capacity for carefully calibrated malice by saying to those present — some of

whom, as a member of the Shadow Cabinet suggested, may just possibly have demonstrated against in Place of Strife — that we've managed to convert Barbara.

Introduced by Clare Short as "our own Iron Chancellor" Gordon Brown's task in the economic debate was less to reassure the markets for the umpteenth time than to convince the Labour Party that there is daylight between his policies and Ken Clarke's. He did so, to the relief and enthusiasm of Conference.

His argument that social justice is not a bonus to be earned if an economic miracle occurs but a precondition of sustainable economic success is far away from the Tory conception.

It is persuasive both ethically and practically. Similarly he stressed the imperative of investing in education, the foundations of economic success being laid not in the boardroom but in the classroom.

All the same, when he asked rhetorically whether our lack of performance is because the British people undervalue education, did he entirely persuade himself that it is not so? Maybe it will take a Scottish Chancellor to have that faith.

Pensions defeat in balance

By ARTHUR LEATHLEY

THE Labour leadership was last night fighting an eleven-hour battle to avert a conference defeat tomorrow as one of the biggest trade unions announced it is to oppose party policy on pension rights.

John Edmunds, general secretary of the GMB, made clear that his union will back Baroness Castle of Blackburn in her fight to force Labour to raise state pensions.

However, two other key unions — Union and the Transport and General Workers' Union — deferred a decision on whether to support demands for pensions to be increased in line with earn-

ings. This left the Labour leadership hoping it could avert embarrassment today, either by defeating the demands in a conference vote or by persuading constituency delegates not to force the issue to a vote.

Tensions over the issue increased last night after Lady Castle accused Harriet Harman, the Shadow Social Security Secretary, of "inventing" figures. She said that Ms Harman had written to trade union leaders telling them that their members should be aware that if pensions were earnings-related, each union member would lose £500 from

a rebate they receive on occupational pensions.

Lady Castle accused the party of "lighting dirty because they are frightened". "That was a complete fabrication to suggest there would be any reduction in the rebate," she said.

Lady Castle has refused to accept a compromise hammered out at the weekend to allow the issue to be covered by a review of pensions policy. Earlier, Gordon Brown, the Shadow Chancellor, flatly rejected Lady Castle's claim that he was putting the "frighteners" on delegates to back the leadership's proposal.

MP decries 'cultural malaise'

A LABOUR frontbencher yesterday attacked the "miserable bunch of chattering classes" who he claimed were "ashamed" of making profitable Hollywood-style films. Dr Kim Howells, the party's trade and industry spokesman and MP for Pontypridd, blamed a "cultural malaise". "I can never understand why Hollywood can raise money and British companies can't," he told a fringe meeting. "I think we have got the directorial talent, we've certainly got acting talent. We've got some decent writers."

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BMA clinical congress

New chief medical officer calls for paracetamol ban

FROM JEREMY LAURANCE, HEALTH CORRESPONDENT, IN ISTANBUL

PARACETAMOL, Britain's most popular painkiller, must be banned, the Government's newly appointed chief medical officer in Scotland said yesterday.

Professor Sir David Carter, who takes up his post on November 1, said paracetamol poisoning was the commonest cause of acute liver failure. Paracetamol poisoning causes more than 100 deaths and 30,000 hospital admissions a year. Almost all were deliberate attempts at suicide.

It has been known for more than a decade that paracetamol could be made safe by the addition of the antidote, acetylcysteine. However, the safer drug costs more and drug companies have been reluctant to promote it because of fears it would damage their sales.

Sir David, who is currently

Professor of Surgery and director of the liver unit at the Royal Edinburgh Infirmary, said one in ten liver transplants performed in his unit was for paracetamol poisoning. He said he could see no reason why paracetamol should not be replaced with a similar product containing an antidote that would make it safe in overdose. "I don't really understand why it can't be removed," he said.

Sir David, who was speaking to the British Medical Association's annual clinical congress, in Istanbul, said that 30 patients with paracetamol poisoning were referred to his unit over two years, of whom ten had transplants.

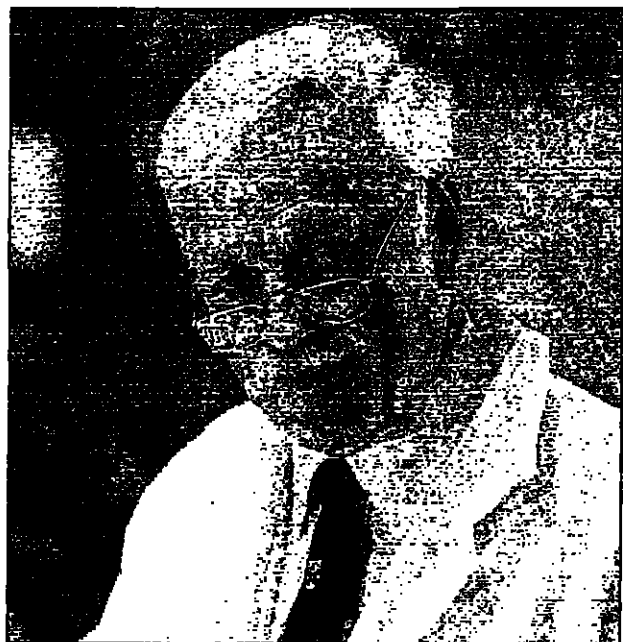
A single dose of 20 tablets was sufficient to cause liver failure but it was often impossible to tell how many tablets had been taken or when: a

liver transplant had to be performed within 24 hours to have a reasonable chance of success.

Asked if he would press for a ban on paracetamol when he takes up his new post he said: "It is one of the issues I would like to take up."

Dr Geoffrey Brandon, director of the Paracetamol Information Bureau, which is financed by the drug's manufacturers, said paracetamol was used by 30 million people a year in the UK and had a remarkable safety record over 40 years. "A tiny minority use it for deliberate self-poisoning but fortunately the recovery rate is better than 99 per cent," he said. Paracetamol accounts for 6 per cent of the 2,000 deaths a year from medical overdoses.

Sir David said that doctors were increasingly referring



Sir David Carter: paracetamol should be replaced

patients with paracetamol overdoses and with alcoholic liver disease for liver transplants, which cost £40,000 each and imposed increasing strain on liver units. He said: "I find this is one of the most difficult issues. Should we be using transplants for alcoholic liver disease when organs are in short supply? The public will have to become more involved."

Sir David said that most victims of paracetamol poisoning were young and did well with liver transplants but sometimes there was a history of drug abuse or infection with

HIV. "If that is in the background it colours your thinking," he said. Alcoholics were required to stop drinking for at least six months before their case for a transplant would be considered.

Sir David admitted that he was playing God. "I think that's inevitable if you practise medicine. We are making clinical decisions that affect life and death all the time. Part of the calculation of risks and benefits involves the setting to which the patient returns and the ability they have to cope medically and socially with the pressures."

When the 'safer' painkiller can cause headaches too

BY DR THOMAS STUTTAFORD

PARACETAMOL is often regarded as the safe alternative to aspirin for headaches. But this is true only when the officially recommended dose of four grams, or eight tablets, a day is not exceeded.

Dr Roger Williams, the retiring director of the Institute of Liver Studies at King's College London, said: "It's untrue to think of paracetamol as a dangerous drug because it's only dangerous if taken in overdose. It is the safest analgesic (painkiller) available, provided that it is taken in the recommended dose. Between 70 and 80 per cent of the patients seen at King's who had attempted suicide with paracetamol were not only trying to kill themselves but had chosen paracetamol because they knew of its liver toxicity."

One of the dangers of paracetamol poisoning is that the lethal dose varies from person to person. But studying the figures at King's College Hospital, 80-90 per cent who had taken a dose that caused liver necrosis had swallowed more than 30 tablets at once. Ten per cent had taken 20-30 tablets and only a



small number had taken fewer than 20. Paracetamol is rapidly absorbed and metabolised, so that if instructions are followed build-up of the drug does not occur.

Aspirin, the alternative to paracetamol, is a useful anti-inflammatory agent as well as being analgesic, and is a life-saving drug for many people with established or potential heart disease. But it has two main disadvantages.

In children, aspirin occasionally causes Reye's syndrome, acute brain damage associated with fatty infiltration of the liver and other organs, and in adults, particularly the aged, aspirin is responsible for gastro-intestinal bleeding — usually no more than a slow ooze but sometimes a serious haemorrhage.

Dr Williams, in keeping with standard teaching on both sides of the Atlantic, recommends to the heavy drinkers that he sees that they

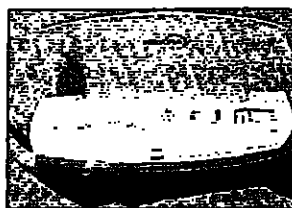
should avoid paracetamol. Immediate treatment of paracetamol poisoning is important. Although the drug is rapidly absorbed through the stomach, a washout is recommended if the patient is seen within four hours. In remote country districts an emetic is injected.

Two antidotes, acetylcysteine and methionine, are available. They are effective only if given within 24 hours, preferably within 15. Methionine is added to some preparations of paracetamol so that those who take an overdose also take the antidote.

To those who need a mild painkiller, the advice is not to give aspirin to young children and to take care if there is a tendency to indigestion. I still prescribe paracetamol, by itself or in combination, but I try to remember to warn patients, whether hardened drinkers or abstemious, never to exceed the recommended dose.

BT cut 20% off national evening calls.

Personal monitor gives women the green light for sex

BY NIGEL HAWKES
SCIENCE EDITOR

The Persona monitor

A NEW contraceptive device launched today will give women the green light when they can have sex without the risk of pregnancy. A small hand-held monitor, containing a mini-laboratory for testing hormone levels and a personal database that builds up a record of monthly cycles, will tell the woman at a glance whether she needs to take precautions.

The device, called Persona, puts natural methods of family planning on a scientific basis. In tests, it proved 95 per cent effective in preventing pregnancy, a success rate comparable with that of condoms.

The system, marketed by the Unilever company Unipath, was welcomed yesterday by independent experts who said that it would be a valuable addition to existing methods. "Persona is a real breakthrough in contraception," Professor John Guillebaud, of the Margaret Pyke Centre in London, said. "It increases women's choice, offering them a method that is not only unambiguous and

simple to use but gives a sense of a woman working with her own body."

The system is based on the well-established fact that pregnancy is possible on only certain days of the month. On the morning after her period begins, the woman presses the start button on the device. Afterwards she checks each morning what light the device is displaying.

Most days it will show green but on about eight mornings in each cycle it will show a yellow light, which means that she has to do a simple urine test. Test-sticks wetted with urine are inserted into the device, which measures the hormone levels. A red or green light follows, depending on the hormones.

Unipath said that on between six and ten days in each cycle Persona would show a red light, indicating that barrier contraception would be necessary that day. The hormone levels are stored on the database, allowing the device to be "tuned" more precisely to each woman's cycle.

Trials were conducted with 1,200 women in Britain, Ireland and Germany. Dr Rosemary Kirkham of the University of Manchester, who has been involved with many contraceptive trials, said: "This is the first time I have found that the volunteers have enjoyment in using the method. It's a wonderful new concept, putting couples in charge of their own fertility."

Professor Bob Snowden of Exeter University, who was involved in the trials, said: "It is very simple to use. There is no fear of side-effects and it is independent of doctors."

The monitor costs £49.95 and a month's supply of the test-sticks is £9.95. Unipath has given Boots exclusive selling rights for the first year.

Birth rate in EU lowest since war

FEWER than four million babies were born in the European Union last year. The fertility rate of 1.43 children per woman was the lowest since the Second World War. Population statistics published yesterday show that, when deaths in Europe are taken into account, the natural increase last year was 290,100.

The figures show that fertility has fallen in most EU countries over the past 15 years. Ireland still has the EU's highest fertility rate, at 1.87 children per woman last year. Next came Finland (1.81), Denmark (1.8), Sweden (1.74), the United Kingdom (1.71) and France (1.7). Italy (1.17) had the lowest.

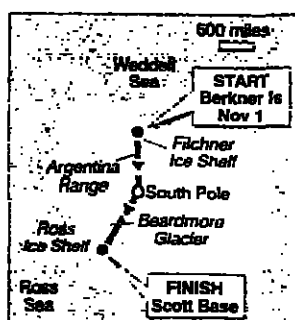
Fiennes plans solo transantarctic trek

BY PETER FOSTER

SIR RANULPH FIENNES, the polar explorer, yesterday outlined his plans to become the first man to cross the Antarctic on foot, alone and unsupported. The journey, across 1,800 miles of frozen wilderness, is expected to take nearly three months.

Sir Ranulph, 53, who sets off on November 1, will drag 500lb of supplies and equipment on a sledge in temperatures as low as -20C (-4F). "I can only liken it to towing a legless bathtub filled with three large men over 1,800 miles of sand dunes," he said.

If he succeeds, Sir Ranulph will have achieved the last major remaining polar exploration record. He already holds the unsupported polar man-haul record with Dr Mike Stroud. Four other competitors, one thought to be



from Britain, are expected to enter the race soon.

Sir Ranulph, an old Etonian and former SAS officer, will set off from Berkner Island and climb to the South Pole plateau at 10,000ft before descending to the Beardmore Glacier, the Ross Ice Shelf and the finish line at Scott Base. The expedition could raise more than £3 million for the breast cancer charity Breakthrough.

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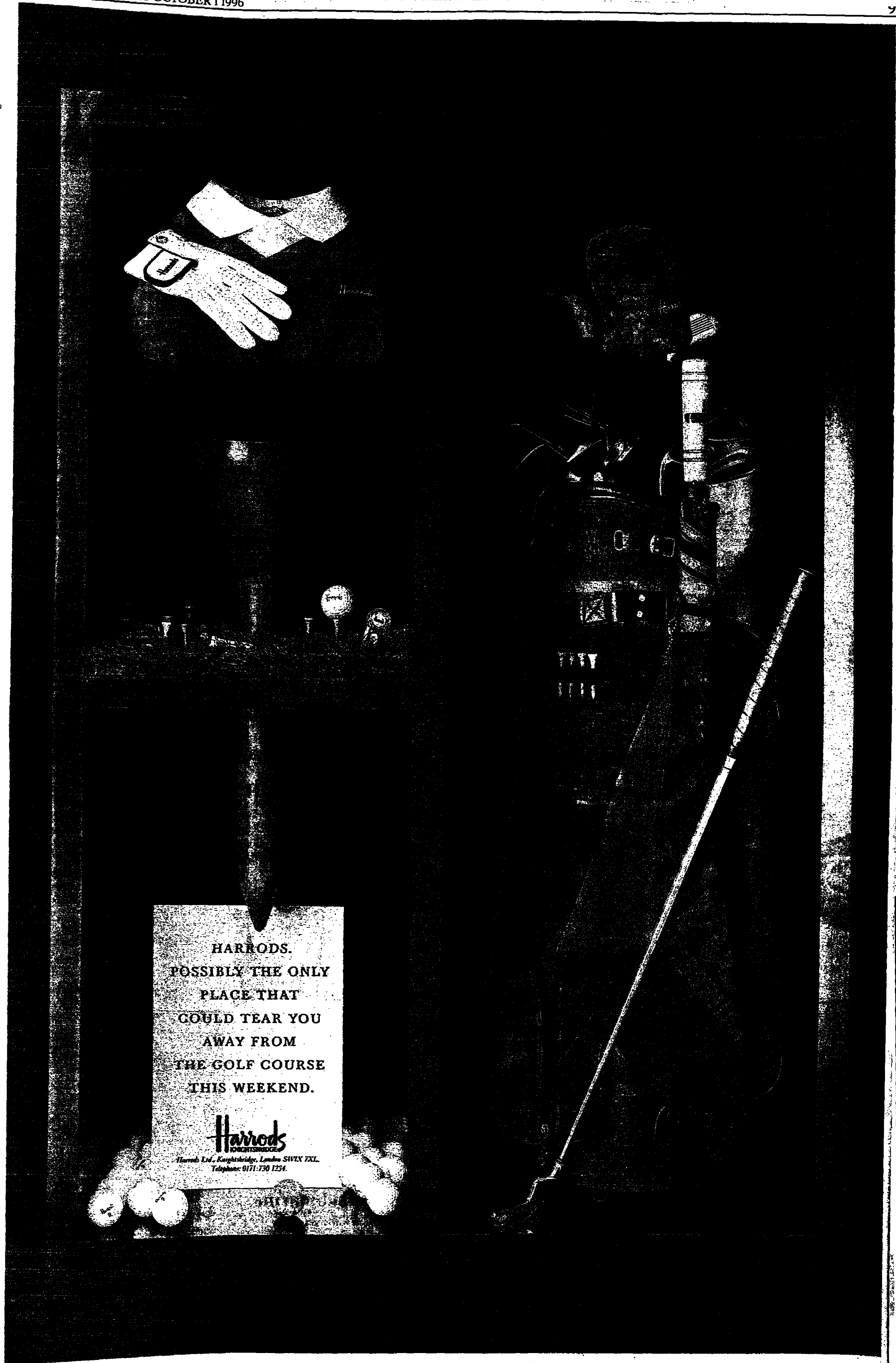
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THE TIMES TUESDAY OCTOBER 1 1996



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Electoral reform rules out safe bets in New Zealand poll

NEW ZEALAND'S first election under proportional representation is proving difficult for voters, commentators and politicians alike. With just over a week to go, only the foolhardy would bet on how the votes might be cast or on what the politicians might do once they are counted.

Despite public education campaigns, many voters are still confused at having to cast two votes — one for their constituency candidate and one for the party of their choice. Politicians seem equally confused by a multiparty system that is virtually certain to lead to coalition government.

The plight of the ruling conservative National Party illustrates the complexities. Its current poll



Bryan Gould says the proportional representation system introduced for next week's elections remains a mystery to both politicians and voters

rating of just below 40 per cent represents a very creditable maintenance of the support that brought it election success in 1993. Under a first-past-the-post system, it would get back in with a working majority. But the now adopted mixed member proportional system means 40 per cent of the vote will produce only 40 per cent of the seats. The National Party desperately needs a coalition

partner — but no right-wing splinter group can be sure of reaching the 5 per cent threshold (or, alternatively, one constituency seat) needed to produce seats in the new Parliament. Even if they did win seats, the presence in a coalition with the National Party of the Christian Coalition (the New Zealand equivalent of the American Moral Majority) or the aggressively free-market Association of

Citizens and Taxpayers would deter other smaller parties from entering such an arrangement.

So the National Party looks like being stuck tantalisingly short of the seats it needs to form a majority government. Jim Bolger, the Prime Minister, is reduced to talking vaguely of a minority government or offering an improbable coalition arrangement with his traditional Labor opponents.

At around a 20 per cent rating in the polls, Labor's Helen Clark is emerging as the most likely next Prime Minister. After three years of low popularity and internal party divisions, she is reaping the reward from a well-run campaign that has allowed her to be seen increasingly as the leader most

likely to put together a viable coalition. Labor's vote may well be higher than its current rating.

This is just as well since no one in Labor's ranks has dared to contemplate the nightmare of having to enter a coalition deal as a junior partner. Labor needs to head off its two potential coalition partners while remaining sufficiently friendly to bring them into a post-election deal.

Ms Clark has played this difficult hand skilfully. Her mix of economic orthodoxy and social conscience may just allow her to keep both the centrist New Zealand First and the left-wing Alliance interested in a deal. Her problem is that her two potential partners have responded very dif-

ferently to the new electoral system. Winston Peters — a defector from the National Cabinet and the populist leader of New Zealand First, whose support seems to have peaked a few months ago — has insisted he will discuss no coalition deals until after the votes have been cast. A National-New Zealand First coalition, therefore, remains a possibility, but personal antipathies make it unlikely.

Jim Anderton, the Alliance leader, on the other hand, is adamant that he will do deals only before the election. Ms Clark resists that for fear of being tarred with the brush of the Alliance's left-wing policies. It is hard to see anyway that Mr Anderton would turn his back on a post-election deal —

especially if refusal meant he carried the can for keeping the National Party in power.

Add to this potent mix the very real possibility that individual MPs might jump ship after the election. Some might refuse to do a deal with parties they particularly dislike. Others might be tempted to 'break ranks for the sake of a post in a Cabinet formed by a rival.

The odds now favour, marginally, a change of government. But the world of PR is still a mystery to most of the players. The only certainty is that it still has some surprises in store.

The author, a former member of the British Shadow Cabinet, is Vice-Chancellor of Waikato University, Hamilton, New Zealand

Bolger accused of 'treason' as race for votes gathers pace

FROM JO ANDREWS IN WELLINGTON

JIM BOLGER, the New Zealand Prime Minister, was accused yesterday of "political treason" and "economic sabotage" by opposition leaders after he suggested that overseas investors should wait until after this month's general election before deciding to invest in the country.

Mr Bolger, whose National Party could lose power to a centre-left coalition in New Zealand's first election under proportional representation, was asked on Australian television what assurances he could offer investors. "I can only say their uncertainty...

at this stage, two weeks out is totally understandable." If he were an overseas investor he would wait to see if a sensible coalition emerged, he said.

"Let me say to Australians, we get some of the loopy policies of the Left come in to New Zealand again, you will get a whole lot of Kiwis over here in a hurry."

His remarks have brought a furious reaction. Winston Peters, leader of New Zealand First, which preaches economic nationalism, said: "It is political treason and could be economic treason were it not for the fact that Aussies are not as dumb as Jim Bolger."

He added that Mr Bolger was behaving like "a spoilt brat".



Clark criticised Bolger for economic sabotage

"He is saying: 'I have to be Prime Minister or things will be disastrous'. Well, people are saying they are disastrous now and we don't want you to be Prime Minister."

Helen Clark, the Labour Party leader, called Mr Bolger's message "economic sabotage" and accused him of "cynically setting out to destroy the New Zealand economy because the people of New Zealand are no longer likely to judge him fit to govern."

Only one party leader has supported Mr Bolger. Richard Prebble, a former Labour minister, now leader of the right-wing ACT party, said: "A left-wing coalition would return New Zealand to 'bor-

row and hope' policies by Christmas."

Mr Bolger denied he had said anything on Australian television that he had not said in public before. "The share market and the exchange rate appear, so far, to have been unaffected by his remarks."

But the row comes at the end of a bad week for the Prime Minister. He has often looked tired and ill. In a televised debate which made use of an audience response meter, known as "the worm", he came last among the four main party leaders. He said later he did not know "the worm" was in use.

The most recent opinion poll still puts the National Party well ahead of the others with 37 per cent of the vote. Labour is on 21 per cent, New Zealand First 16 per cent, the Alliance 14 per cent and ACT at about 6 per cent.

Under the old Westminster-style "first-past-the-post" system, this would probably have been enough to give the National Party outright victory, but under the new voting system, a government can only be formed by coalition. At present, the odds on a broadly left-wing or broadly right-wing grouping appear evenly balanced. Polling day is on October 12.



Relatives of Port Arthur massacre victims leave court in Hobart yesterday and, below, Martin Bryant, who faces 35 murder charges

Massacre relatives sob at suspect's denial

FROM RACHEL BRIDGE IN SYDNEY

ANGER and grief erupted in Tasmania's Supreme Court yesterday as Martin Bryant, the man accused of the island's Port Arthur massacre in April in which 35 people died, pleaded not guilty to all 72 charges against him.

Friends and relatives of those who died sobbed and held hands in the packed court room as the charges

against Bryant, 29, which include 35 counts of murder, were read out. However, the sight of the defendant grinning as he responded to the charges proved too much for the brother of one victim, who shouted "You're a bloody coward, Bryant", before being removed from the court.

At one stage, Bryant appeared to stifle a laugh before saying yet again "not guilty" in a quiet but firm voice. In the wake of numerous bomb

threats, police mounted one of Australia's tightest security operations for Bryant's first public appearance since the massacre. Streets were cordoned off as the van carrying him was escorted from Hobart's Risdon prison by eight police cars. Once inside, Bryant was shielded by a bulletproof glass screen for the 30-minute hearing.

The trial, expected to last five weeks, begins before a jury next month. Bryant was remanded in custody.



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Fears for Rao's life delay case

FROM REUTER IN DELHI

P. V. NARASIMHA RAO, the former Prime Minister of India, won a temporary reprieve in a criminal conspiracy case after police said militants could attack the political leader in Delhi's crowded courts.

Mr Rao had been summoned to appear before a lower court judge yesterday to face charges and possible arrest in the \$100,000 (£64,000) conspiracy case. He would have been the first former Prime Minister to appear in court in a criminal case.

The Supreme Court intervened after police said the teeming Tis Hazari court complex was vulnerable to extremist attacks. It ruled that Mr Rao did not have to appear in court until it meets on October 7 to decide on the police demand that the hearing be shifted to a more secure location such as a nearby sports stadium, which would be easier to defend.

□ Lucknow: The north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh state began polls yesterday which analysts said could test the ability of H.D. Deve Gowda, the Prime Minister, to ride out a challenge from Hindu nationalists. Lucknow, the state capital, is the main base of the Bharatiya Janata Party.

Ex-envoy accuses Patten of lying over democracy

FROM JONATHAN MIRSKY IN HONG KONG

SIR PERCY CRADOCK, former adviser on China to Margaret Thatcher and John Major, yesterday accused Chris Patten of being either misguided or a liar and charged him with doing Hong Kong "unique harm".

In a torrent of abuse from which even China might shrink, Sir Percy, once British Ambassador to Peking, also attacked the colony's Governor for what he called his "careerism".

In an article in the English-language *South China Morning Post*, Sir Percy, who played a leading role in the negotiations with Peking which led to the 1984 Sino-British agreement on transferring Hong Kong's sovereignty, concentrated his fire on Mr Patten's claim that the two sides undertook to bring democracy to Hong Kong. To claim this, Sir Percy said, Mr Patten "is either deluding himself or willfully misleading his listeners".

The *South China Morning Post* failed to identify Sir Percy as one of its directors, although it mentions his past official posts back home in Britain. The Governor is "the principle author of the last four years' damage to Hong Kong, to which he has done unique harm", Sir Percy

wrote, "and his likely motive is polishing his own image in Britain and America as a democratic crusader".

Sir Percy's attack comes as Mr Patten prepares to deliver his policy address to the Legislative Council tomorrow, the last such annual speech before next year's handover to China, which will be a valedictory and a look at Hong Kong's future under Peking's rule.

The essence of Sir Percy's position, which he has often stated, is that Britain, with its lease on Hong Kong about to expire, is limited in what it can achieve with a powerful China. "The obligation was to promote a degree of democra-



Cradock criticised Governor's crusade

cy that would last, not to put on a short self-serving show which would only provoke a Chinese backlash and leave Hong Kong worse off in terms of democracy than when the experiment began."

The response from Government House last night was: "Sir Percy is not the first mandarin to imagine he is an emperor." In a letter which appears today in the same newspaper, the Governor's office replies that Sir Percy "represents a genuine belief that the only way to deal with Peking is through appeasement". Mr Patten himself has always maintained that his plan for the Legislative Council to be wholly elected, as it was last year, was for a "modest degree of democracy". In its letter, Government House quotes Lady Thatcher describing the Sino-British agreement as providing "for a steady expansion of democracy in Hong Kong".

The Government House statement also quotes Baroness Young, Minister of State at the Foreign Office, as telling the House of Lords: "I fully accept the legitimate concerns which have been expressed that we should develop a solidly based democratic administration in Hong Kong in the period up to 1997."

Seoul troops kill fugitive from spy submarine

FROM ROBERT WHYMANT IN TOKYO

SOUTH KOREAN troops hunted down and killed a North Korean infiltrator in the search for remnants of an armed squad of "Communist guerrillas", the Defence Ministry in Seoul said yesterday.

Only three survivors are believed to be still at large in the mountainous area around Kangnung, where thousands of South Korean troops are concentrating the spy hunt. Yesterday's incident brought to 22 the total of infiltrators killed since entering the South after their submarine ran aground near Kangnung on

September 18. Security forces have eliminated 11, and another 11 were found dead in an apparent suicide pact. Another man who was captured is believed to have told interrogators that 26 North Koreans were on board.

North Korea accused the South yesterday of cold-blooded murder. In a statement issued through its mission in Geneva, Pyongyang said Seoul was using the incident to distract attention from problems at home and difficulties in its relationship with America and Japan.

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Netanyahu rejects 'reward' to Arafat for bloodshed

FROM CHRISTOPHER WALKER IN JERUSALEM AND CHARLES BREMNER IN LUXEMBOURG

ON the eve of the crisis summit in Washington designed to salvage the Middle East peace process and prevent a war between Jews and Palestinians, the Israeli Government announced last night that it would be giving "no reward" to Yasser Arafat for last week's bloodshed.

Binyamin Netanyahu, the Israeli Prime Minister, told reporters on the aircraft taking him to the United States that he was ready to have non-stop negotiations with the Palestinians, starting next week, on an Israeli troop redeployment in Hebron and the Israeli closure of the West Bank and Gaza.

"I am proposing that the two sides meet right after the meeting in Washington in a locale to be determined to engage in continuous negotiations until agreement is reached," he said. Similar tactics were used at the Camp David talks in 1978 which led to the peace deal between Egypt and Israel. "Once agreement is reached on these issues, implementation can be immediate," Mr Netanyahu said.

Earlier, Mr Arafat had failed in attempts to have the summit delayed in order to work out an agenda more favourable to the Arab side, and after a day of playing, in the words of one cynical diplomat, "hard to get", he announced that he would be travelling to Luxembourg where he was seeking diplomatic backing from European Union foreign ministers.

In Luxembourg, Mr Arafat is hoping that Dick Spring, the Irish Foreign Minister and current president of the EU Foreign Affairs Council, will add the European voice to calls on Israel to show more

flexibility. The EU's council last week issued an even-handed call for restraint, expressing "serious concern" over the violence in the occupied territories. France, which has been seeking to offer itself as an alternative to Washington as a Middle East broker, is pressing for the EU to take a tougher line with what is seen as Israeli intransigence and Washington's monopoly over diplomacy.

In addition to Mr Arafat and the Israeli team, King Hussein of Jordan will also be present at the Washington talks, the State Department said. President Mubarak of Egypt will not attend. The summit is taking place against a tinderbox atmosphere in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza, where hundreds of Israeli tanks are poised to attack Palestinian towns if more anti-Israeli violence flares up. Security sources said they were concerned that Islamic extremist and hardline Jewish settlers opposed to the 1993 peace deal may try to exploit the situation.

Although the fierce exchanges of recent days appeared to have been brought temporarily under control by the Palestinian police, there were numerous stone-throwing attacks on Israelis in and around east Jerusalem yesterday where religious Jews continued to throng through the disputed Hasmonean tunnel which the Israeli Government has vowed will never be closed.

The tough Israeli line was laid down by Moshe Fogel, the chief government spokesman, which emphasised the diplomatic problems facing President Clinton when he tries to engineer a successful conclusion to a meeting that, all sides admit, has been ill-prepared in advance.

"If the problems of the Palestinians are not given a proper answer, there will be an explosion much worse than you have just seen," said one young Palestinian in Bethlehem, some of recent pitched battles with Israeli troops.

Mr Fogel warned Mr Arafat: "You cannot conduct negotiations with a gun to our head."

Hardening the claim that Mr Arafat cynically whipped up last week's clashes, which left 69 dead and nearly 1,500 injured and involved the worst fighting between Jews and Palestinians since the 1967 Middle East war, Mr Fogel said: "We are not going to be rewarding Mr Arafat for initiating such violence. Some of last week's actions are going to be backfire [on him] because we are not going to reward terror diplomatically."

The last-minute doubts about the viability of the summit began when Mr Arafat travelled yesterday from Gaza to Egypt for talks with President Mubarak, who had set the closing of the Jerusalem tunnel, which runs for 500 yards in the Temple Mount area, as a condition for his attendance.

Egyptian officials were afraid that Mr Netanyahu would be able to emerge without making concessions and were angered that their suggestion of Cairo as a summit venue had been rejected by Israel. American diplomatic sources said that President Clinton planned to participate directly in the sessions beginning today.

Mr Netanyahu said before leaving that he would not discuss the opening of the new exit to the tunnel with Mr Arafat because it was Israel's business alone. "It will not be on my table," he told CNN.



The Hanshin expressway linking Kobe and Osaka which was reopened yesterday after a six-mile section had been repaired and strengthened by arched steel plates

New highway rises above ruins of Kobe earthquake

FROM ROBERT WHYMAN IN TOKYO AND OUR FOREIGN STAFF

THE main artery linking Osaka and Kobe was reopened to traffic yesterday, 20 months after it was toppled by the earthquake of January 1995. Traffic began flowing on the Hanshin expressway after a ceremony to mark this new stage in the recovery of the region's economy.

The quake flattened much of Kobe and its vicinity, killing more than 6,000 people. Images of the collapse of a section of the elevated expressway, and the sagging pillars supporting it, brought home the extent of the destruction.

Officials said new engineering methods had enabled the reopening of the expressway three months earlier than expected. The road has been rebuilt to resist big earthquakes by reinforcing the reconstructed sections and columns along the length of the roadway, they said.

The reopening of the whole 24-mile highway linking Kobe with Osaka, came with the opening of a newly-repaired six-mile section. The cost of the work was estimated at about £1.3 billion.

Sixteen people were killed when the road collapsed. Many people have kept away from the area and local residents hope that reopening the expressway will bring them more tourists and business.



The wrecked highway after the 1995 quake

The number of visitors to Kobe was 10.7 million people last year, a 56 per cent decrease from the previous year, according to local government officials.

While buildings and roads have been rebuilt, hundreds of victims are still facing difficulties, with deaths of quake victims continuing to be reported. The body of a 38-year-old Japanese man was found ten months after he died in a shelter built for

people left homeless by the earthquake, police said.

The decomposed body of Masao Yamashita was found on Sunday in a prefabricated shelter in Port Island, located just south of Kobe's main city of Sannomiya. It was the 103rd case of "lone death" in such a shelter. The victim, who was jobless and lived alone on welfare, was reportedly suffering from a damaged liver.

About 40,000 families made homeless by the earthquake are still living in temporary lodgings, including 258 people in hostels.

While the official death toll from the quake was 6,300, citizen groups claim there have been a further 2,900 deaths from suicide or neglect. The groups say the toll could reach 10,000 by the end of the year.

□ Taipei: A group of Taiwanese activists asserting that a chain of disputed islands were Chinese burnt a Japanese flag yesterday and set up a makeshift shrine to mourn David Chan, a Hong Kong protester, who drowned last week. Chan died trying to press China's claim to the Diaoyu Islands, which are referred to as the Senkakus by the Japanese. (AFP)

Life is rich for King's assailant

Los Angeles: Four years after being captured on videotape brutally beating the black motorist Rodney King, Stacey Koon, a former police sergeant, is a free man — and a multimillionaire (Giles Whittell writes).

In a crowning irony to the case that exposed the racial schisms of inner-city America, the policeman — convicted of violating Mr King's civil rights — has emerged by some estimates \$8 million (£5.1 million) richer thanks to legal defence and trust funds for his family. Mr King won damages of \$3.8 million.

Computer king tops \$18.5bn

New York: There are 41 more American billionaires this year than last. Forbes magazine has found (Quentin Letts writes). Top of the pile again are Bill Gates of Microsoft with \$18.5 billion (£11.8 billion) and the stock market player Warren Buffett, with \$15 billion. The magazine identified 1996 as the year of the billionaire boom, thanks to a buoyant Wall Street and the growing computer market.

Lyons court tries Scientologists

Paris: Twenty-three members of the Church of Scientology went on trial in Lyons, accused of crimes ranging from manslaughter to fraud (Ben Macintyre writes). The trial stems from the suicide of a Scientologist. The Lyons appeal court, which allowed the trial, described the sect as "a major threat to democratic society".

Surgery date

Rome: The Pope, 76, will have surgery next week to remove his appendix, the Vatican said. It said audiences would be suspended from Monday, but it did not say when the pontiff would go to hospital. (Reuters)

Children's plight

Cologne: Unicef said millions of children were still dying from hunger and disease and the situation had barely improved in six years, despite its pledge to fight the problem at a 1990 summit. (Reuters)

Cells 'of death'

Nairobi: Kenyan jails are "dungeons of death" where inmates are tortured, denied medical care and forced to share cells with corpses, a Kenya Human Rights Commission report said. (AFP)

Poll success

Moscow: Russia's opposition communists celebrated the election of Vadim Gusov, a candidate they backed, as governor of the Leningrad region around St Petersburg. (Reuters)

Vanuatu vote

Port Vila: The Vanuatu Government of Maxime Carlot was toppled by a no-confidence vote in the South Pacific nation's parliament. Serge Vohor, an opposition coalition leader, replaces him. (Reuters)

Hard-nosed

Bucharest: Residents of Braila in eastern Romania face fines of up to £200 for blowing their noses in public under proposals by the Romanian Ecology Party. Spitting will also be an offence. (AFP)

Clinton stakes his re-election on peace

FROM MARTIN FLETCHER IN WASHINGTON

FIVE weeks before polling day President Clinton has just breached a cardinal rule of electoral politics. By inviting the Israeli and Palestinian leaders to an emergency summit in Washington today, he has placed himself in a risky political situation over which he has little control.

If the two-day encounter succeeds in putting the peace process back on track, Mr Clinton is likely to be acclaimed as a global statesman. But if it fails, Bob Dole will have further cause to portray him as a weak and ineffective steward of US foreign policy.

Neither Binyamin Netanyahu, the Israeli leader, nor Yasser Arafat, President of the Palestinian Authority, sound in any mood to compromise. They are "estranged", admitted Warren Christopher, the Secretary of State. Electoral fears could discourage Mr Clinton from pressuring Mr Netanyahu.

The Administration privately blames the fighting on Mr Netanyahu's stalling of the peace process and opening of the tunnel. Many American Jews regret the Prime Minister's stalling, but they would be far more alarmed if Mr Clinton sided with the Palestinians. The Jewish-American vote is important in key states like Florida, California and New York.

Mr Dole warned Mr Clinton not to impose a solution on Israel, but the Palestinians warned him not to go soft on Mr Netanyahu for electoral reasons. "We're willing to give him the photo opportunity that he is the President who can save the peace process — providing he is giving us substance," said Hanan Ashrawi, a top Arafat adviser.

A second reason the President has only limited leverage over Mr Netanyahu is that he openly backed his more dovish rival and predecessor, Shimon Peres, in last May's Israeli election.



Yasser Arafat with an Egyptian official yesterday

Britain urges tough EU line on Burma

BY MICHAEL BINYON, DIPLOMATIC EDITOR

BRITAIN yesterday called for fresh international action against Burma, and will today urge its European Union partners to support new measures against the State Law and Order Restoration Committee (SLORC), the ruling army council.

The Foreign Office, strongly criticising the Burmese Government's action in preventing Aung San Suu Kyi, the opposition leader and Nobel laureate, from delivering a speech at the weekend, expressed concern at reports of widespread repression of pro-democracy supporters in Burma. "We strongly condemn the detention of members of the opposition National League for Democracy," it said.

Britain may urge its EU partners to impose new sanctions on the Burmese

junta, which recently stepped up harassment of its opponents. A spokesman for SLORC admitted that 109 people were being detained in government guest houses.

Britain has instructed its ambassador in Rangoon to complain about the restrictions on freedom of speech and assembly directly to the ruling council.

Denmark has been pressing for sanctions against Burma since the suspicious death of James Nichols, its honorary consul and godfather to Daw Suu Kyi. Nichols, who also represented Finland, a member of the EU, and Norway and Switzerland, was arrested in April and sentenced to three years in prison for operating home telephones and fax machines without permission.

The National League for Democracy had planned to hold a three-day party

congress beginning last Friday, but the regime said that the meeting was illegal and detained party members for questioning.

Japan, Burma's biggest aid donor, expressed concern yesterday at the developments in Rangoon, with a government spokesman, Seiroku Kajiyama, telling a news conference: "The freedom of political parties to conduct their activities must be recognised."

Tokyo suspended some big aid projects after bloody crackdowns on pro-democracy forces in 1988, but has held off from using its aid of about £90 million a year as a lever to ensure that the country moves towards democracy.

In the past, Britain has opposed sanctions unless they can be agreed at the United Nations.

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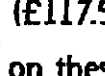
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Onset of winter spells danger for warlords hunted by Afghanistan's holy army

Taleban overruns more cities in push to capture north

FROM CHRISTOPHER THOMAS IN KABUL

THE Taleban students' army moved north with its mass of tanks and artillery yesterday, capturing new provinces in a relentless drive through the deserts of Afghanistan.

The fighters now control more than two-thirds of the country. Northern warlords are massed with thousands of troops for perhaps the most decisive battle in recent Afghan history. The worsening weather will be key in determining what happens next.

Taleban is pursuing thousands of government troops who have fled to a redoubt in the northeast through the strategic 1.6-mile Salang tunnel in the Hindu Kush. Their escape routes over mountain passes will be blocked by snow within a few weeks, leaving them besieged for the harsh winter when large-scale fighting will be impossible.

Taleban last night reached the southern mouth of the tunnel. The only direct route from the northeast is now severed. The turbaned, long-haired holy army seems invincible. Mullah Muhammad Rabbani, head of a six-man council ruling Kabul, is now arguably the most powerful man in the land.

He consulted his top commanders yesterday at his headquarters in the Presidential Palace, symbolically protected by a decrepit Russian tank parked at the ornate iron gates at the entrance. Taleban soldiers have spread brightly coloured artificial flowers across the rusted hulk in a gesture to peace.

The long-bearded commanders sat on leather armchairs in a large, carpeted conference room in the old presidential office as crystal chandeliers tinkled in a breeze wafting through smashed windows. Their vehicles, the spoils of war, were lined up outside: mostly stolen Mitsubishi Pajeros brought in by smugglers from Central Asia, as well as one dust-covered black Mercedes limousine



that used to be the official car of the Minister of Security.

The morale, strength and resources of Taleban are the product of massive outside support: its claim to have no foreign backing is absurd. Pakistan is plainly involved. America may also secretly support Taleban, for all the group's Islamic fundamentalism, because it can impose stability on a strategically important region and is vehemently anti-Communist.

There is a precedent for this: the largest covert operation in the history of the CIA was mounted in support of Islamic fundamentalists in Afghanistan to oust the Soviet Union, which invaded in 1979. The new foreign involvement echoes those catastrophic Cold War interventions, which left a legacy of guns and drugs.

Ten per cent of the population, about a million people, died in the superpowers' proxy war. The new interventionists are Iran, Saudi Arabia, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, India and Russia, which are backing various factions directly or indirectly for a variety of reasons. Huge resources from heroin production feeds the fighting. Russia printed billions of Afghan banknotes for the ousted Kabul Government, helping it to stay afloat despite being bankrupt.

Mullah Rabbani has two key opponents: General Rashid Dostum, the Uzbek warlord from the north, and Ahmed Shah Masood, military chief of the ousted regime. General Dostum has perhaps 20,000 men under arms. Thousands are now at the northern end of the Salang tunnel, awaiting any Taleban attempt to break through.

Mr Masood and his vanquished army is cornered in his Panshir Valley stronghold with the former President, Burhanuddin Rabbani and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the former Prime Minister. Mr Hekmatyar, the principal recipient of billions of dollars of American aid during the Cold War, no longer has an army.

Charikar, capital of the northern Parwan province, fell to Taleban yesterday, as did the key town of Jalalabad. Taleban's success is due to its reputation for discipline, making it relatively popular even among non-Pashatuns who are sick of 17 years of war. Meanwhile women in Kabul, the capital, who have been banned by Taleban from working outside the home, drew small comfort yesterday from an announcement that female civil servants would continue receiving salaries. They are furious at being forced into purdah.

Men have been given six weeks to grow full beards or face severe punishment.

Leading article, page 17



Residents of Charikar, 40 miles north of Kabul, cheer as the Taleban militia enters the city yesterday. There was little resistance from government forces

Fall of Kabul takes Bhutto by surprise

BY MICHAEL EVANS, DEFENCE CORRESPONDENT

BENAZIR BHUTTO, the Pakistani Prime Minister, said yesterday she hoped her country had no intention of interfering in the internal affairs of a neighbouring country.

Miss Bhutto "categorically denied" that Pakistan had supported the Taleban movement in its campaign to seize Kabul but she said she was now hopeful that the change in government would end the bloodshed in Afghanistan.

On a visit to London, she said that Pakistan had agreed to act as a channel for Western arms and money during the occupation by Soviet troops. In exchange, Pakistan had been given \$4.2 billion (£2.7 billion) in aid by the United States for the purchase of military equipment. However, since the Kremlin had withdrawn its forces, the money from the US had stopped and Pakistan had not been in a position to arm or finance the Taleban, Miss

Bhutto, addressing the International Institute for Strategic Studies, said that Pakistan had no intention of interfering in the internal affairs of a neighbouring country.

Afghanistan, she said, had been facing turmoil ever since "foreign troops" went in. She said the world grew tired of Afghanistan and turned its attention elsewhere, such as Bosnia and the Middle East.

"We didn't expect the Taleban to take control in Kabul," she stated.

Miss Bhutto added: "The situation is still fluid. But if there is stability and an end to bloodshed, we in Pakistan hope we'll be a moderating influence."

Border closed: Thousands of people were stranded and Red Cross relief supplies were refused entry after Taleban closed the main Torkham border crossing between Afghanistan and Pakistan without notice yesterday. (AP)

Moscow shudders at militant Muslim threat on borders

FROM THOMAS DE WAAL IN MOSCOW

RUSSIA is reacting with dismay and dread to the Taleban advance through Afghanistan, which has swept aside old allies and enemies alike.

There may have been some satisfaction at the humiliation of Ahmed Shah Masood, the partisan commander who harried the Russians in the 1980s. But there have been shudders at the summary killing of the last pro-Moscow leader, Muhammad Najibullah, by Taleban.

Mikhail Gorbachev, the former Soviet President, called the killing of Najibullah a "lynching and a kind of savagery", while Yuli Vorontsov, the Russian Ambassador in Kabul at the time of the Soviet troop withdrawal and now Russian Ambassador in Washington, painted a sympathetic portrait of the former President in a television interview. Najibullah, he said, was a "well-read", cultured man

who did not deserve his reputation as a mass murderer. Afghanistan has faded from Russian public memory since the military pullout in 1989. The Chechen war is much closer to home and has been shown more vividly on television. But there is a small group of Russians who were involved in the war and for whom it is still an obsession. Many of them feel that Moscow betrayed its Afghan friends, and may now be reaping the cost.

"After discussions with people who have fought in Afghanistan and are now in Moscow at the Defence Ministry, I found a lot of people saying we should not have stopped helping the Najibullah regime after the Soviet collapse," Artyom Borovik, who was one of the most famous Russian correspondents in the Afghan war, said yesterday. "We made a big

mistake and now a belt of Muslim fundamentalist state is being created in the under belly of the former Soviet Union."

The worry in Moscow now is that Taleban's successes have upset the balance of forces in Afghanistan and this could reignite the war in Tajikistan. Russia already has thousands of troops on the Tajik frontier against raiding from Islamic rebels based in Afghanistan. President Yeltsin once declared that "the Tajik frontier is essentially the frontier of Russia". The Foreign Ministry called the situation "fraught with danger for international peace and the stability of the region".

There is an instinctive fear of Islamic fundamentalism in Russia. Pavel Felgenhauer, the military journalist, wrote that "Tajikistan cannot be held" if a jihad is launched from across the border.

Nazi gold inquiry to go ahead

FROM PETER CAPELLA IN GENEVA

THE lower house of the Swiss parliament yesterday approved a commission of inquiry into the nation's financial dealings with Nazi Germany after a debate which showed unease with Switzerland's banking establishment.

The main political parties, stung by the tone of accusations from Britain and the United States, decided to restrict proceedings to formal party statements. Although the primary aim was to avoid xenophobic speeches by extreme right-wing MPs, some left-wing deputies complained that it also prevented them from challenging banking secrecy laws.

The commission of independent financial and legal experts, which is likely to clear approval in the Senate in December, has the power temporarily to lift banking secrecy in the course of its five-year inquiry.

It is expected to start work next spring and will look into all aspects of financial dealings with Nazi Germany after 1933, from gold transactions by the National Bank to the fate of private accounts.

The experts will work in parallel with another investigation headed by a former chief of the US Federal Reserve, Paul Volcker.

French schools closed as teachers strike over cuts

FROM BEN MACINTYRE IN PARIS

SCHOOLS across France closed yesterday as teachers launched the autumn's first big strike in protest at government austerity plans to cut the deficit in time for European monetary union.

Unions claimed more than 80 per cent of primary teachers and more than 60 per cent of secondary staff responded to the strike call against moves to eliminate more than 5,000 school jobs. The Government said support for the strike was not so great, with fewer than 60 per cent taking action in primary schools, but conceded that disruption had been widespread.

The administration of Alain Juppé, the Prime Minister, yesterday unveiled an "anti-poverty plan" which aims to create 300,000 jobs over the next five years. All would be for at least 30 hours a week, paying about Fr5,500 (£720) a month — met by the employer and the Government.

The plan, which also envisages creating 100,000 subsidised housing units, will cost an estimated Fr500 million in its first year and will be financed by diverting funds from other programmes, Jacques Barrot, the Social Affairs Minister, said.

Unions hailed yesterday's strike as a significant victory and a harbinger of further unrest unless the Government



Juppé stands accused of ignoring unions

backs off from a 1997 budget designed to meet the Maastricht criteria for a single currency by reducing next year's budget deficit to 3 per cent of gross domestic product.

The strike was the first for four years in which the five main teaching unions, representing nearly 900,000 staff and usually divided, have co-ordinated action. The Government has insisted the job cuts are justified by falling birth-rates and has pledged to create 2,700 higher education posts.

Teacher unions staged demonstrations in 60 towns and cities. In Paris, a crowd of several thousand marched from the Sorbonne to the Education Ministry, and more than 2,000 paraded through

Bordeaux, where M Juppé is Mayor. The protests were joined by numerous students, key players in last winter's strikes, who claim education cuts will worsen already chronic overcrowding and bring dwindling standards.

The high turnout is likely to boost union confidence in a massive show of strength on October 17, when civil service unions and rail workers will strike for 24 hours.

In the past few days, sporadic strike action has been building with stoppages by airline, utility and ambulance workers, who are demanding greater job security and protesting at spending cuts and restructuring plans. The protests have taken on fresh urgency with the release of figures showing unemployment at 12.6 per cent last month, a record high.

Marc Blondel, head of the powerful Force Ouvrière, yesterday accused the Government of ignoring the unions, saying: "Since last October, Juppé's Labour Affairs Minister has not called me once."

■ Bonn: Tens of thousands of workers at Daimler-Benz, Germany's biggest industrial concern, will demonstrate today as part of a nationwide wave of anger against a government cut in sick pay. (AFP)

Austerity budget, page 32

Rumblings over Kremlin silver dining set

FROM THOMAS DE WAAL IN MOSCOW AND ROGER BOYES IN BONN

THE Kremlin has emulated the tsars by ordering a hand-made, 6,000-piece silver service from Germany to entertain its guests, while the elderly are going without pensions, according to the opposition.

The order was made in February to the German firm of Robbe und Berking. Among the items now being used in four government guest houses are 40 silver caviar dishes, 20 champagne buckets and 20 sauce boats, each inscribed with a double-headed eagle. The pieces are individually made by workers who wear white gloves so as not to sully the silver.

Oliver Berking, the owner of the company, said the order was one of the most extensive in the firm's 120-year

history, but he would not specify a price, saying only it cost "significantly below" one million marks (about £420,000). However Radio Mayak, Russia's most popular radio station, estimated the price at several million marks. The state-funded station, which is on the brink of bankruptcy, used the incident to complain that the state budget is being squandered.

The presidential buildings in the Kremlin have been restored and refitted at enormous cost and millions are already being spent on new statues of Peter the Great and Nicholas II in time for the 850th anniversary of the founding of Moscow next year. Opposition politicians say this is immoral when some

pensions and state sector salaries have not been paid for months.

"The current regime are parasites when it comes to consumption," said Aleksei Mironov, chief lieutenant of the extreme nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy.

"It all reminds me of 1916 and 1917 when they were again buying from Germany and they pretended to be surprised when the Bolsheviks appeared. It can't carry on, when 97 per cent of the population lives in penury," he said.

The purchase is in the tradition of Catherine the Great, who bought the famous Orlov dinner service from France in the 18th century — although it consisted of a mere 2,500 pieces.

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Day 2: Bel Mooney on her feelings as she reaches the exciting uplands of her fiftieth year

'It has taken me 50 years to realise love is what really matters'



Bel Mooney on reaching her half-century: "Thirty? Nah — I don't want to be 30 again. Not with the fire in me now"

At the front of my Filofax (old habits die hard) I have written a number of quotations which I look at every day. One from Samuel Beckett seems to offer more and more consolation: "No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better."

Why talk of failure at 50? Because this is part of that "letting go". It seems wise to move on from the arrogance of the twenties and thirties, and the mingled complacency and cynicism of the forties, into that state of humility which is as T. S. Eliot wrote "endless".

To acknowledge your mistakes, to hope that you can "fail better", seems a fitting replacement for the sexual vanity and vainglorious dreams of acclaim, and foolish expectations of perfection which I confess to as the sins of my youth.

At 30 I used to admire the in-dour face sentiment of Piaf: *Je me regrette rien*, and imagine that in middle-age I'd shout it from the rooftops. Now it is not so simple. I do regret things, and the act of regret allows in a kind of awe at the miracle of survival: My God, aren't I lucky? Then, flattered, you are liberated at last to look forward, not backwards. Another of the daily maxims is from Ibsen: Live, work, act. Don't sit here and brood and grope among insoluble enigmas.

The chief feeling is one of relief. To acknowledge that you have no answers (now as you tip into the second half-century, knowing that this bit is downhill all the way) is the first step to wondering if you

were asking the right questions. It feels like stumbling into a strange room in a power cut, and groping out of habit for the light switch... fumble... then snap, the power is on after all, and you step forward, looking around and realising that you knew this place all along. You belong.

'It seems wise to move on into a state of humility'

Some experiences concentrate the mind most wonderfully. They may be personal, but are so sublime that to hug them to your chest seems selfish.

On August 28, after six months of deteriorating health, our daughter Kitty (16), endured over eight hours of major, difficult surgery on her bowel. For weeks before I walked around in shadow, convinced she would not survive. She shared the terrible dread. Early in the morning of August 29 she opened her eyes in intensive care, painfully reached out a punctured hand, and said in a clear, sweet voice, "Mummy, I didn't die. And I'm going to get better."

All I could say was, "Yes". It occurred to me then that if it has taken me 50 years to

know, finally, what I had always suspected — that nothing else matters — then I am overjoyed to have arrived at last.

The knowledge comes hard. In the summer Kitty and I attended the funeral of a 15-year-old girl who died of cancer on her ward. She had made friends with another teenager who is unlikely to live beyond 20. At midnight after her operation I spent an hour talking to a young couple whose baby has spent three months at home, and six months in hospital, and who has but a small chance of survival... and I recognised that look of dumb bewilderment on their faces.

Sometimes I have felt shrunken, like Alice, and scrambling desperately to swim in my own tears. Suffer the little children indeed, here and all around the world, and no answer to the painful scream, "Why?"

Then, on the ward, day after day you are privileged to witness the extraordinary patient love of parents of every age, race and class; the gentle gaiety, understanding and brilliance of the nurses; the acute concern and dedicated skill of the doctors — one in particular, there in Bristol Children's Hospital, who has the grace and courage to cry when my daughter cries...

How can you not delight in a world with such people in it? Brave and new indeed. Their countless murmurs of tenderness and encouragement, and little jokes, and family stories, together swell to an Ode to Joy which drowns out the shrieks

of fear and pain. So there, for me, was one of the elusive answers. The God-shaped hole in my universe is filled with people, some known to me, some unknown. The indisputable fact of heroism, all over the world, weighs equal in the scales with the horror and the hatred. To the question, "What are we here for?", Ibsen's, "Think, work, act", is still a fine answer. But it falls short. Thinking, working and

acting are nothing unless impelled by the most important imperative: Love.

A close friend, 50 next month, said to me, "Getting old physically doesn't bother me — the spare tyre, double chin, and hairy toes! What's far more sobering is to know that maybe I've had more than two-thirds of my life. I do think more and more about spiritual things".

She is a Christian, but for years has understood my own longing for God and failure to find him. Recently (maybe as a result of being in Bosnia) I stopped looking, but the spiritual search still goes on, both in churches and in fields close to home. When I pray, it is to the Universe, vast and implacable though it is, and if that is God, then this Earth itself is my Christ, with the Holy Spirit the air we breathe... a Trinity worth worshipping and crusading for.

Interestingly, another fiftieth birthday this year is that of the Soil Association, which goes on patiently beating the drum for organic agriculture.

Maybe another sign of my age is that it actually feels more relevant to my life now than *Woman's Hour's* birthday: I passionately believe that unless we step back from the arrogant folly which has led us to abuse this planet in so many ways, we are doomed. This is beyond gender and party politics. I sit on our hillside, gaze at the beauty of the land, and find another answer. "Mum-my, I didn't die", means that she and all children, those as

start with new Labour, but a return to some of the values and disciplines I grew up with. I wait for the day when the Prince of Wales is recognised for the infinitely gentle, farseeing, hardworking, intelligent, spiritual and utterly civilised force for good that he is. (OK, so he made a mistake: so did I — lots.) It will come. Despite all the proofs coming in, and despite my rage, I carry a torch of optimism. But I won't buy anybody's package deal or belief.

Alice grew up. She left wonderland behind, and stepped through a looking glass, into her own kitchen, scene of so many years' loving domesticity. It's not that I don't want to go to the party any more; it's here in my own home.

In May I stayed up all night with my son, drinking and smoking and talking, and at five in the morning we tottered on a long walk in the valley. Then he slumped the rest of the day asleep in bed, and I spent it at the hospital. I said, "Don't think me old, boy, until you can keep up!" Despite my children's mirth I've booked a first riding lesson for my birthday, because I want to go trekking in the Andes in a

'I have a number of quotations which I look at every day'

year's time, sleeping under the stars. I walk at midnight with the Labrador and collie I bought my husband, amazed by my solitude, the night, and the fact that I used to detest dogs.

As the sunlight fills the kitchen, and I reach 50, I put on Beethoven's *Spring* (or maybe Clapton's *Timepieces*) and raise a glass to some things changing and some things staying the same.

To the family and friends without whom I could not live. To the husband of nearly 29 years whose silly sayings I love. To the fact that our son is engaged to a girl beautiful in every respect, so that I can finally "come out" and say that my chief ambition is to be a grandmother. To the day when finally our daughter will leave hospital forever. *Nothing else matters.*

Then, to all the writers (dead and alive) whose books line my library, because their insights cannot be destroyed by the grossest anti-culture. To art and music. Even to the people I disagree with because they keep me on my toes. To "cakes and ale". To infinite possibility...

Where to stop? There's no time to stop.

Thirty? Nah — I don't want to be 30 again. Not with the fire in me now.

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Why I sacked Michael Flatley

Producer Moya Doherty tells how she dismissed Riverdance's biggest star. Interview by Jason Cowley

Moya Doherty is seldom lost for words. Ask her, for instance, about her role as producer of *Riverdance*, the Irish dance spectacular that has generated about £30 million in 20 months, and she delivers a monologue encompassing the Irish diaspora, the physical demands of hard-shoe dancing and, more perplexingly, Anne Diamond — they worked together at TV-am in the late Eighties.

But ask her about Michael Flatley, the former star of *Riverdance* who she sacked in October last year on the eve of the show's return to London, and she falls silent. Not for long, though, for their dispute is a wound which Mr Flatley insists on reopening but which Ms Doherty says she wants to heal.

While Mr Flatley has spent the past year complaining about his sacking, Ms Doherty has said nothing. She claims not to have seen *Lord of the Dance*, the show he set up as a rival to *Riverdance*, though she knows enough about its gaudy, Vegas-style extravagance to dismiss it as "not what we would have done".

On the question of her prolonged silence, she says: "I didn't want our dispute to be played out in the media. I have the highest admiration for Michael as a dancer and choreographer but he was and is a solo player. He found it hard being part of a troupe and not having the control he wanted. Tension grew between us making it almost impossible to conclude contractual negotiations."

When, in June 1995, *Riverdance* moved from the Point Theatre in Dublin to the 3,200-seat Hammersmith Apollo, Mr Flatley was earning £50,000 a week. A cult of personality developed around him. It was his name and face on the posters and flyers, and his 30ft image was displayed outside the Apollo like a benign dictator.

Naturally his co-star, fellow Irish-American Jean Butler, felt slighted and excluded. She had once received equal-billing but, according to *Riverdance* insiders, as Mr Flatley became more demanding so



Michael Flatley, in white shirt, performing in *Riverdance*, the successful Irish show. But his demands became too much, says Moya Doherty, the producer, and the decision was taken to let him go



Moya Doherty: suffered

'When the show moved from Dublin to Hammersmith, Michael Flatley was earning £50,000 a week'

Ms Butler was demoted to co-star. "Michael wanted complete artistic control," Doherty says. "His demands were too much. For example, he wanted no other male to dance solo with him — things we couldn't possibly allow."

Sacking Mr Flatley gave her no pleasure: "I suffered hugely. I didn't want to lose him and would have liked him to dance in America."

But why did she leave it so late to dismiss him, especially as his understudy, Colin Dunne, had only a few hours

in which to prepare? "Surely the lateness of the sacking shows our desire to reach agreement with him," she counters. "All along we had constantly moved the goalposts to accommodate his demands. We tried to find common ground. Michael was being paid an awful lot of money. He sold himself as the highest paid dancer of all time — he probably was."

Mr Flatley describes his sacking as the most devastating moment of his career. "I was raring to go on stage the

next night. I felt like a stallion. Then the lawyer rang and the bottom fell out of my world. I stood staring out of the window."

"My father called me and I was close to tears. I'm very sensitive. He said, 'Mike, you created *Riverdance*, you can create another one'."

But Mr Flatley did not create *Riverdance*. He was principal choreographer and dancer, but the idea was exclusively Ms Doherty's. As a freelance producer at the TV station RTE in Dublin, she devised *Riverdance* as a seven-minute interval entertainment for the 1994 Eurovision Song Contest. The performance was rapturously received.

With the *Riverdance* single topping the Irish charts for 18 weeks, and the *Riverdance* for *Rwanda* video — a recording of the Eurovision sequence — selling 100,000 copies in a month, demand for a longer, more complete performance was overpowering.

"I knew that we had created something marvellous with *Riverdance* and had to act

quickly to make the most of it," says Ms Doherty. She raised £500,000 from investors, including Paul McGuinness, manager of the pop band U2.

Bill Whelan composed the music in three months and Mr Flatley had even less time to choreograph the main dances. The Point was booked at a cost of £70,000 a week, with the opening night scheduled for February 21, 1995.

"The pressures and strains were immense. We stood to lose a lot of money. I lost weight, my sleep patterns were disturbed and I saw very little of my two young sons [Mark, seven, and Daniel, four]. Yet, because the project had been tested in front of 300

million Eurovision viewers, I sensed that we couldn't fail."

Her instinct proved correct: *Riverdance: The Show* reached £1 million sales in three weeks. In June, the show transferred to London and immediately sold out.

It is now on its third run at the Hammersmith Apollo. It opened at Radio City Music Hall in New York in March, and a full US tour will start on Saturday.

Yet success has been marred by conflict. In interviews, Mr Flatley repeatedly hints at Doherty's ruthlessness, and there is something forbidding in her manner. Small talk is

kept to a minimum. She never allows you to forget that she is a reluctant interviewee.

Born in Donegal in March 1958, her parents were both teachers. The family moved to Dublin in the early Sixties. She joined RTE in the late Seventies then moved to London and worked for four years at TV-am as a reporter, returning to Ireland in 1989. "It feels tremendously good to be Irish at the moment. *Riverdance* emerged at roughly the same time as the peace process, and as one who is proud of my country but opposed to violence, I feel much better about calling myself a nationalist," she says.

Determined, rich beyond

her wildest expectations and restlessly ambitious, Ms Doherty seeks to take *Riverdance* to a global audience. "One show cannot satisfy the demand. Our goal is to have three or four shows touring the world."

So Mr Flatley's dismissal confirmed that the strength of the show lay not in its star but in its collective vitality. "Getting rid of Michael was a traumatic decision. But I had this deep rooted faith in the show. What his departure has done is to give others the freedom to dance that role. It has also given us the confidence to experiment, so that *Riverdance* can grow to reach even more people."

Playing by the rules

When a man marries early, encourages his wife to put home and children first, and then replaces her with a younger model, what are the rules of the game? For example, how far should the first wife be indulged if she becomes obstructive or abusive? When should the second wife graciously accept second place, and when should she insist on her rights? Should the man keep his first family in the style to which it is accustomed and expect his second wife to do the same for him?

No two pundits agree. Some, like the makers of the new film *The First Wives Club*, seem to think that any discarded wife has the right and the duty to get even. Others like Val Corbett, Joyce Hopkirk and Eve Pollard, in their new blockbuster about serial spouses, *The Best of Enemies*, suggest there is a bigger, better Hollywood ending awaiting all those who stop thinking like dependants and start talking like Susie Orbach. But does life ever work quite as neatly as their plot does? Having tormented, and suffered, at the hands of

What is the etiquette governing behaviour between first and second wives asks Maureen Freely?



The First Wives Club stars: Fonda, Midler and MacLaine

two wives myself, I would give anything to say yes. Alas, the best I can do is say yes, but.

Yes of course it is healthier for all parties concerned if they accept that vows are not what they used to be and move on. But it is far more satisfying, in the short term anyway, to shunt the blame onto someone else. Certainly I spent the happiest years of my first marriage doing just that.

My voodoo doll's name was Flora. When I walked onto the scene, she was still the legal wife but had already become a radical feminist. My husband-to-be was still trying to make sense of it all, and I was happy to help him so long as he kept the picture black and white and two dimensional. If he sighed they had both been too young. I would cry, not not. It was all down to that vixen. I did have a jolt, though, the only time I met her. She was neither as bad nor as beautiful as the rival of my imagination. Maybe that is why I was so keen not to meet the first wife of my present partner.

My new love was a long-suffering saint who had brought up his children alone

while his wife Ruby sat in bed reading mystery stories. No wonder he ended up finding solace elsewhere.

Imagine how shocked I was the first time he brought his children to stay. It was not just that he plopped into the nearest armchair, opened the newspaper, and left the entertainment to me. It was the reproach of the children's overnight bag. Everything in it was neatly folded and ironed, even the underwear. I had just convinced myself that she had done it to spite me, when my new love asked if I had got round yet to ironing his sheets. I came dangerously close to having to face the truth that day. But Ruby had a healthy vindictive streak. "How much longer is she going to go on tormenting me?" I remember waiting to my best friend. I was left speechless when she said: "Oh don't worry, she'll let up when he leaves you for someone else. Then you can sit up all night discussing what a bastard he is."

Never! I thought. But I have to admit, I have seen quite a few first and second wives brought together by wife number three. There is my friend Sara, a first

wife who spent years foaming at the mouth about Mara, who "stole her husband away". Then, only hours after she's heard he's left Mara for Lara, she is blowing smoke through her nose and saying, "It looks as if I may have got out just in time."

Most serial husbands I know long for the day when their warring wives learn to co-operate. I am not so sure they should. I cannot help remembering the three-parent family I met on holiday. Two of the parents were married to each other. The third was the man's ex. At first I was amazed at how beautifully they behaved with one another. And they never neglected the children in the way normal two-parent families do. If a child so much as formed his lips in such a way as to suggest the word "juice", both mothers were on their feet. Then it was a three-course meal, an impromptu science lecture, five hours with a book of brain-twisters, and a songfest.

The father of all these children was not so lucky. If he so much as asked for the salt during supper, they rolled their eyes at each other and said: "There he goes again". After the dishes were done they launched into a long conversation about the national curriculum and did not even notice when he sloped off to the pub.

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TOMORROW

FASHION INTERFACE

CAST OFF COLUMNS

Regular Times columnist
Barbara Latham and Alan Cogan
with mid-week food for thought

Pupils must come before the tables

Culling unpromising sixth-formers is cynical and indefensible

I know a man whose Lottery fantasy is to set up a charitable foundation to prove certain people wrong. He will make television programmes turned down by Alan Yentob and win awards with them. He will open hospitals wards and make medical history, and back businesses which have been unfairly dropped by timid banks so that they succeed (and with luck, buy up the banks).

Yesterday he would have been on the phone to a number of 17-year-olds with a simple offer: a free place at a good sixth-form college so that, well taught, they could get their grades and conquer the world and forever embarrass the heads who chucked them out as no-hopers who were impeding their schools' places in the league tables. The charity would be called the Yah Boo Sucks Foundation.

Alas, it does not exist. We must merely hope that some of the scores of adolescents who are being rejected in this manner will find their own way on and up. That they exist is in no doubt. Private crammers say that since the league tables began four years ago, there has been a sharp rise in pupils who join half-way through their A-level courses. Not only independent but state schools are pressing "weak" candidates to withdraw from subjects at the end of the first year of the sixth form. Elizabeth Richards, of a London tutorial college, says "some schools are being absolutely ruthless", and questions what becomes of the rejects who cannot afford eight thousand quid to pick up the pieces privately. She cites a pupil on an assisted place who was thrown out because of weak maths and was not even allowed to do her other subjects. Not all schools even bother to deny this policy; the principal of Queen's College in London says heartily: "If I were in the horse world, I would not put horses over hurdles they could not jump."

The more competitive state schools are moving rapidly in the same direction: some parents express surprise that the London Oratory, for instance, where Tony Blair's son is going, makes a point of not giving up on weak candidates. Their surprise gives a clue as to how attitudes have shifted in the most ambitious schools. It is true that in the public sector a fig-leaf is generally proffered: commenting on the revelations of Ms Richards yesterday, the head of one comprehensive in York demurred about "the student's best interests. If someone were doing disastrously, it would not be fair to let them carry on." Not fair? Why, exactly? Don't answer that. The rise in lower-sixth pupils chucked out since league tables suggests that these "best interests" have curiously come to coincide with the best interests of ambitious heads.

Most notoriously of all, and a clear target for the Yah Boo Sucks Foundation, is Roy Chapman of Malvern College. He is the very man who told the Headmasters' Conference in 1994 that public schools fill "the gaping moral vacuum in society". He has admitted that the reason he has thrown out nine lower-sixth pupils in the past two years is that they "would have reflected on our league table performance... made a big difference to our points total and final position". They were, he says, all idle; but if the points total matters that much, and schools are so confident about their internal predictions (which are often wrong, as thousands of recent A-level candidates know to their chagrin), then how long will it be before it becomes acceptable to admit to routinely chucking out those who are just a bit dim, or whose parents' divorce has upset them in the lower sixth, or who suffer a bout of glandular fever or a ghastly love affair?

Mr Chapman did prudently add, "We are not going to chop the weak who really try", but laziness in teenagers has many and complex causes. The impression given, to this parent at least, is that league tables are starting to matter more than children. Otherwise, why didn't he throw out the bone idle ones in the days before league tables? It can't have been just because they were paying fees, perish the thought. Mr Chapman must have believed that there was still something the school could do for them. Urge them on, try to interest them, find a GNVQ that would suit them better if the academic course was wrong; state them, gale them, motivate them, that sort of thing. But now, the precious "points total and final position" forbid such efforts. Out with them quick, before they besmirch our image!

It stinks. It suggests, if you like, a gaping moral vacuum. For one thing, it is a curious age, and "mock" results are not infallible. I was firmly predicted to fail Latin, largely because I was chucked out of the Roman history class for having an irrational hatred of the teacher. In the end I crammed alone and managed a D and a Latin-dependent university place.

Any honest school could find far more striking examples of recoveries, surprises and unpredicted disasters too, all fuelled by the volatile and fluctuating energies of youth. More importantly, even if the school predictors are right and the pupil is going to scrape two E grades, that is no reason to give up. Those Es might represent a lot to a child who has had difficulties. Or they might shock an idle and arrogant one into humbly resisting the exams a year later and winning. A school's job is to understand and help pupils, to cull them. Unless they are seriously disruptive — but that is not what we are talking about.

Schools should be warned. Apart from a few snobbish fools, we parents are not actually obsessed with league tables. We just want our children to be helped to their personal best, by schools which put effort into finding what that is. Suspiciously, I rang my son's *alma mater*, the Royal Hospital School in Suffolk, which because of its charitable roots has a comprehensive social and intellectual intake and so hovers in mid-table, always hoping to go up. As innocently as I could manage, I asked: "Do you cull your idle first-year sixth? Malvern does, so it's obviously all right now." There was an explosion of shocked wrath. "Certainly not. We've taken them to be dreadful. Once we've taken them, we struggle on." Oh good.

Try the same question on yours today. If they sound shifty in their denial, check to see if the numbers fall from the first to the second year sixth. You may think, right now, that your little Johnny is bright and willing; but if he hits a bad patch, do you really want him sacrificed to a pageful of crabbed numbers?

Libby Purves

Woodrow Wyatt, as Chairman of the Tote, says crazy regulations are harming racing

Absurd hurdles that ruin the ride

Frankie Dettori's seven winners in a row at Saturday's Ascot Festival meeting was a spectacular which will help racing by attracting larger crowds when he rides. For bookmakers it was an instant calamity. Dettori has become the punters' favourite. The mass of winning bets in singles, doubles, trebles and other combinations lost us in our 204 Tote betting shops and in our credit business £700,000. Extrapolate that to the other 8,500 or so betting shops, and bookmakers' total losses must have been about £30 million on the day.

But they had the solace of betting on winning numbers in the Irish lottery. This would have brought a profit of some half a million on Saturday. Since April, bookmakers have been astonished by the amazing rise in betting on Irish lottery numbers, which now amounts to between 2 and 2½ per cent of turnover. The odds are 54 for getting one number right, rising to 44,370-1 for five numbers. Few manage to get even one number right. No levy is paid to the Horserace Betting Levy Board, and the profits are vast.

If the Tote had been allowed these bets, it would have made an extra profit since April of £700,000. Not offering them loses customers in droves to other betting shops, and when they do they also make all their usual bets. It will be very hard to win the lost customers back. Our betting-shop turnover has dropped by 9 per cent, whereas generally the fall has been only 3.7 per cent. That reverses the position in the year ending March 31, when our betting-shop turnover fell by only 1.27 per cent and the other bookmakers' fell by 2.21 per cent.

In February, Home Office officials were urged to petition to allow us to bet on Irish lottery numbers. A simple order in Parliament is required, taking 30 days to pass. On April 12, I wrote to Michael Howard pressing the point. He didn't reply until July 29, despite my frequent calls to his office. He referred to the possible reaction in the industry (even though all the major bookmakers support the Tote on Irish lottery numbers) and to the need to consult colleagues. "I have now set this in hand," he said. But we have heard nothing since, and it is October. Our irrecoverable loss of profit increases daily. This is laughable from a Government that is supposedly dedicated to deregulation. In reality it is piling it on.

Discourteously and without consultation with us, the Home Office has registered the Tote as a Non-Departmental Public Body. The Tote is unique on the 1,227-strong list of these bodies, in that it has never had a penny from the Government, makes large profits which it gives to racing (which is the highest source that a *sui generis* body like the Tote was never intended to be on the list of Non-Departmental Public Bodies. It could be removed tomorrow but for official unwillingness to admit a mistake. Consequently a Nolan-style advertisement will appear for applicants to succeed me as Chairman when I retire on April 30 next year.

The same procedure will be used each time one of our five non-executive board members comes to the end of his term of office. The procedure is wearisome and laborious, and it is unlikely that the kind of person who would be a suitable Chairman or board member will be prepared to go through the tedious and degrading business of submitting a CV and then, if shortlisted, being interviewed in a competition arranged by Home Office officials with no knowledge of the commercial business that the Tote operates.

No one disputes that the statute governing the Tote makes it clear that the Home Secretary, though he may make board appointments, has no power to give instructions to the Chairman or the board. If he doesn't like them, his remedy is not to reappoint them. The statute also lays down that the board members "may regulate their own procedure and make standing orders governing the conduct of their business". Notwithstanding this, the Home Office has sought to impose a model code of conduct, and when we rejected sections of it this was started to find that it could do nothing about it within the law.

Likewise, the Cabinet Office "Efficiency" Unit sent us 42 closely printed pages of instructions, at a cost to the taxpayer of £22,000. These were mostly gibberish, and included such gems as: "Where a Generic Personal Objective is applied, this should be made 'smart' by linking to the Specific Work Programme..." and "Remember that Personal Objectives are not meant to be a detailed 'Stand Alone' description of the individual's work programme..." We were told that ministers would be ordered constantly to review and to interfere with the day-to-day running of the Tote.

I wrote to Sir Robin Butler, the Cabinet Secretary, asking him what legal power the Cabinet Office, or any other government body, has to overrule the statute controlling the Tote. As he was obliged to answer that it has none, the Tote will ignore all *ultra vires* orders from any source. But they began pouring out of the Cabinet Office in February, and the trend is clear. Emulating Brussels, Whitehall and its ministers are bent on extending their destructive reach. Power corrupts and bureaucratic power corrupts absolutely, to paraphrase Lord Acton.

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The real election is nigh

Peter Stothard joins the Labour Party delegates at Blackpool and tells a tale of two pictures

Some fifty miles separate Tony Blair's party conference at Blackpool from Wordsworth's home village of Grasmere. This year an enthusiastic assortment of "New Labour" supporters, all planning their trips independently as far as I could see, decided that a visit to the seaside politicians merited a detour to the lakeside poets.

Why were they there, sitting against the dry-stone walls with agendas in their waterproof pockets? Seeking fresh air before the days of dust in Blackpool's bars? Maybe. Topping up with romantic sensibility? I think not: pragmatism is their order for the rest of this week. Hoping to meet that devoted backer of the Wordsworth Trust and former Labour conference hero, Michael Foot? No: for any self-respecting, self-promoting Blackpool Blairite, a smile from Mr Foot would be as welcome as a mark of Cain.

Inside Wordsworth's Grasmere home is a rare cloth-capped portrait of the poet's sister, Dorothy, which was until recently owned by the Labour MP Joyce Quinn and her family. There is also a copy of *The Times* from June 1800 showing total public spending as a mere £54,366,306 9/4d: this latter was once favourably remarked upon by John Major and might also appeal to new Labour's would-be "Iron Chancellor", Gordon Brown. But none of these would be reasons to delay reaching the Golden Mile.

One attraction of Grasmere is, however, well worthy of a Labour politician's pit-stop. Readers of *The Times* Saturday Magazine may recall how a few weeks ago our art critic, Richard Cork, hailed a "ground-breaking exhibition" of the prose and paintings of Benjamin Robert Haydon, a friend both of Wordsworth and of Keats. Haydon is best known for his massive scenes from ancient history, but he was also an idealistic political radical, anti-monarchist and campaigner for electoral reform. On the museum walls of Grasmere hang together two political pictures which dramatically grab the visitor's attention. I had been in Blackpool barely a few hours yesterday before their message

and subject came flooding back. The first painting is called *The Mock Election* and it well matches what I remember of Labour's party conference mood last year. The Hogarthian scene shows a London debtor's prison in 1827, where the inmates are participating in a cheerful mimicry of the political process. The chief candidate, sporting a large red rosette on his hat, is confidently canvassing his fellows' support; lobbyists proffer petitions and partygoers quaff wine. Any sense of a real election is far away, so much so that George IV, no instinctive lover of the democratic niceties, added the work to the royal collection for the hefty price of 500 guineas.

The second picture is *Chairing the Member*, and it brings us closer to the distinctly different atmosphere of this year's conference. Inside the same debtor's prison, where Haydon himself served two separate sentences, the mock election party is continuing. But the characters are facing a harder reality. The red-rosetted candidate is certain that this time he will gain power. But he is battling against a guard and raising his champagne glass in anger; he could easily have been a delegate in the Imperial bar last night. In this second painting, which did not win the royal favour or money of the first, there is a genuine and disciplined enemy. Royal soldiers are waiting for orders to hit back. The partying politicians are suddenly more fearful, grounded and sullen.

Labour delegates here in Blackpool are strikingly down-to-earth by comparison with last year. The real election is nearer. Tony Blair has huge self-confidence and defends himself vigorously against internal critics at all the various regional party receptions around town. But it is too late to buoy up his forces with new constitutions or philosophies. New Labour's most recent attempts to maintain the momentum of change — on child benefit, trade union links and Scottish devolution — have frightened his supporters more than his opponents.

There is a much greater awareness than before of the Conservatives' capabilities and potential strength. That may seem surprising. The Cabinet has not matched the closeness of the election date with the traditional closing of its party ranks. But Labour is nervous of what would happen if Tory discipline returned. So far this summer, Lord Saatchi's soldiery has made only the merest feints; and yet it has drawn blood.

Labour's confidence comes strongly from outside itself, from its dominance of the public opinion polls and the lionising by lobbyists and influence-seekers that comes from such "mock election" triumph. There are mixed feelings in Blackpool about this. When a Gallup poll yesterday showed a six-point drop in Labour support and deep unease about disunity in the party, Labour's leaders affected quiet satisfaction, saying that it was easier to exert discipline when their poll lead fell nearer to the likely reality.

Indeed, they seemed happy in general with this year's pre-election mood. Behind that confidence, however, lies a worry about where the poll fall will stop. The giant



Chairing the Member: the candidate held aloft might easily have been a delegate at Blackpool

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questions are just how much the pollsters have been underestimating Tory support and just how much benefit the economic recovery will bring the Government. In the pretend politics of dinner-party talk and shopping-mall interviews it is not chic to profess support for John Major: in real elections, it does not matter what is chic. In pretend politics, the battle between hope and fear is won by hope; real elections give fear a chance.

Delegates know that behind the jolly smiles of John Prescott, Gordon Brown and Robin Cook lie seething rivalries over influence now and power later. Divisions on sensitive issues this autumn may help Blair if he is elected: the old Left will not be able to claim that it was not warned. But divisions can also cost votes. A prudent Labour Party, knowing that it has not won a real general election for two decades, would keep its arguments somewhat quieter — a point that Tony Blair is likely to reinforce in his speech today.

When Haydon chose a prison setting for his pictures, he was not only making a point about penal policy. He was transfixed by the

way men's endless hopes and unbounded imagination are limited by external constraints — "whether it be six thousand feet or six thousand miles". Last year Labour's focus was on its imagination; yesterday it was on its limits.

As for tomorrow, loyal followers of new Labour have been proudly carrying John Rentoul's new paperback biography of Tony Blair. In it they have read how thirty years ago the future Labour leader was preparing for his own mock election, and how while Harold Wilson was facing the nation on behalf of Labour, the young Blair was wooing his Durham Chorister schoolmates as a Conservative. At the last minute, as a contemporary recalled, the fates wanted to say to him, "Conservative so far, but no further". On mock election day, he was ill. In defiance of the national trend another Tory took over — and was elected.

The author is Editor of *The Times*. The Haydon exhibition at the Wordsworth Trust, Grasmere, Cumbria, ends on November 3. The catalogue is available by post, priced £15 plus £3 p.p.

Beaux jest

WHILE the Duchess of York battles to prevent further news of her handsome beaux from hitting the streets, young blades in Australia are fighting for a waltz with Diana, Princess of Wales.

The talk on Sydney's lagern'

lime circuit is of James Packer, eligible bachelor and polo-playing son of the gambling media tycoon Kerry Packer. They say he refuses to pay \$1,000 to sup with the Princess later this month at a charity dinner, where she will be



Picture this, James: dancing with the Princess

guest of honour, unless he can also dance with her.

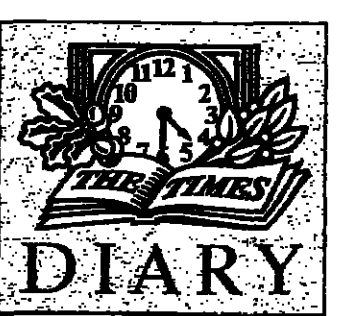
A precedent was set the other day in Washington, when the single Princess was seen waltzing giddily with the likes of Calvin Klein and General Colin Powell at a society function. The general was quite overcome and sang quietly into her ear as he held her in his arms on the dance floor. "Heaven," he crooned, "I'm in Heaven."

Diana's new single status has set Antipodean pulses racing, and a round on the dance floor with the Princess is regarded as the ultimate social achievement. This may explain why Clive James, round television presenter and paid-up member of Diana's fan club, has taken up tango lessons in London.

Sgt Pepper

THE WALL OF STEEL surrounding Labour's conference in Blackpool was breached yesterday afternoon by an explosion of pepper gas.

At around 4pm, guards stopped a woman and told her to show them a sinister looking canister in her bag. One of the bodies took the canister, clearly marked "self defence spray", shook it and merrily pressed the button. Within seconds the press gallery nearby



and delegates around were coughing and spluttering. Mo Mowlam, the Shadow Northern Ireland Secretary, was sent into rabid convulsions as she bowed through the exhibition area. Donald Dewar, Labour's chief whip, was doubled up inside the hall. The gas even sneaked its way as far as the podium speaker, who had her big moment ruined by choking.

In the best PC Plod tradition, the guard responsible explained: "There was no way I was letting that through, so I tested it. Perhaps I should have taken it outside."

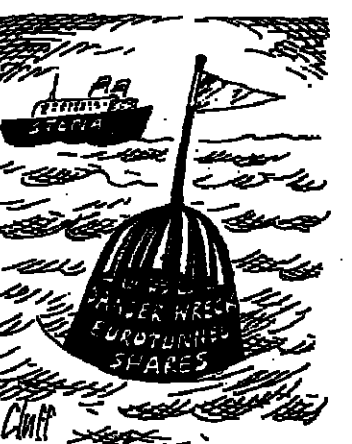
Another awkward moment in Blackpool yesterday came when Baroness Castle, 85 and chief basher of Labour's pension plans, was refused entrance to the conference. Nothing to do with Labour's

dark forces, it emerged. The Baroness had forgotten her pass.

Cat naps

LABOUR nearly had the plumpest of all fat cats within their grasp at the party conference. But he escaped unrecognised.

On Sunday evening, Gordon Brown's advisers in his campaign against excessive salaries in the privatised utilities were settling in for a quiet pre-conference dinner. Ed Balls and Charlie Whelan chose the River House restaurant, a favoured haunt for conference-goers.



They were sitting just feet away from Cedric Brown, the former managing director of British Gas, who was dining with his wife. Balls and Whelan failed to spot their quarry, and were disappointed when they discovered that he had eluded them. Cedric Brown explained later that he had popped in, tantalisingly, on his way to a conference in Edinburgh. Perhaps he could have paid their bill?

Drama news

EMMA THOMPSON may be estranged from her husband, Kenneth Branagh, but she can take solace in academia. Her Cambridge college has offered her an honorary fellowship.

Thompson went up in 1978 to read English. She was as well known for her activities with the Footlights as for her discreet *al fresco* encounters with fellow undergraduates. She also sported a shaved head during her student years.

Knee deep

PANDORA CLIFFORD, the ebullient daughter of Timothy "Three Graces" Clifford of the National Gallery in Scotland, has been ap-



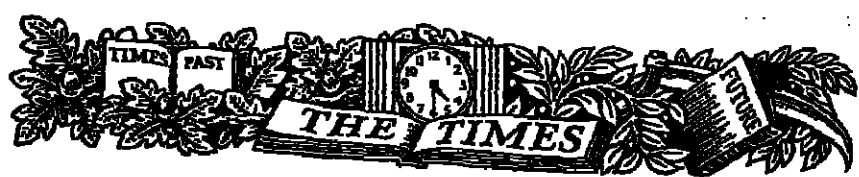
Pandora: on her knees

plying herself with vigour to her acting career. Too much vigour, perhaps.

She opens tomorrow at the Shaw Theatre in Britain as the romantic lead in *Ordine*, Giraudoux's tragicomic fairy tale of a water nymph, the object of a knight errant's passion.

Acting the part of an adolescent girl, she has been hurling herself at the feet of various men so valiantly that she has damaged her knees. "I have to wear knee pads under my costume now," she says.

P-H-S



BROWN'S WAY

Blackpool grasps the spirit of new Labour

To engage the hearts and heads of Labour conference delegates at the same time has always been a difficult task. Once they used to respond only to appeals to the heart; appeals to the head were received with sullen silence. Yesterday Gordon Brown demonstrated that it was possible to engage delegates' brains too. For the first time as Shadow Chancellor he won himself a standing ovation with a skilful weaving of the impassioned and the impassive.

There are certain buttons a Labour conference speaker can press that will ensure instant applause: defending the poor, attacking the rich, renationalising the railways, keeping the Post Office public. Homage to John Smith is both obligatory and a guarantee of success. But who would have thought that Mr Brown could win applause for promising to bring inflation under control, or for the need for financial discipline and prudence?

His rhetorical trick was to bring together in one sentence the hard-headed and the soft-hearted: thus the spirit of John Smith was summoned to defend the need for modernisation; workers on low incomes and pensioners were invoked in Mr Brown's assault against inflation. But it is still to the conference's credit that delegates applauded his hard-headed defence of Labour's controversial plan to means-test child benefit for 16 to 18-year-olds.

Delegates are at last starting to warm to new Labour's themes. Under Mr Brown's vision of Britain, there will be equality only of opportunity, not of outcome. The "central job of government", he said, was to create a meritocratic society, in which "what each of us can achieve depends less on where we come from, what school we went to and what privileges we inherit, and more on our potential and on the opportunities we have to make the most of our potential". What he

wants, in short, is a classless society. Have we not heard that before, from the leader of the Conservatives? For the first time in decades, both parties now share an important goal: the question before the electorate, and a crucial one, is which is most likely to achieve it.

References to "the many" and "the few" peppered Mr Brown's speech, in a deliberate allusion to Labour's new Clause 4: abolishing capital gains tax and inheritance tax would help only the few; using the money to lower the starting rate of tax would benefit the many. Now that punitive taxation is off Labour's agenda, the "few" seem to be defined only as millionaires or utility bosses; but every party has to have its bogymen, and these are at least smaller in number than the entire middle and upper classes who used to be Labour's natural enemies.

If Tony Blair and Mr Brown have managed to wean their party off the levelling-down form of egalitarianism that used to be its trademark, then that is some achievement. Another sign of this transformation came yesterday with the re-election of Harriet Harman to the National Executive Committee. Ms Harman had committed the cardinal sin, in old Labour eyes, of sending her son to a grammar school. But many new members of the party seemed to have accepted this as the natural maternal instinct at work, wanting her son to have the best chance in life.

This vote was a far better indication of the modernisation of the party than next month's approval of the draft manifesto will be. The latter is a foregone conclusion, since members gain nothing from voting against it. The vote for Ms Harman shows that the unbending attachment to narrow ideology, the bitterness and class hatred, are finally losing their grip on Labour.

AFGHANISTAN'S AGONY

Taliban success trades one horror for another

For the shell-shocked inhabitants of Kabul, bombed and rocked for the past five years in Afghanistan's bloody civil war, the lightning victory of the Taliban has brought an end to the random horror that has left thousands mutilated and reduced Kabul to rubble. That, at least, is something for which they can only be grateful. Yesterday the student militia further consolidated its hold on the country, sweeping north in relentless pursuit of the former government forces and capturing key towns and a province. Guerrilla leaders who once held divisions of the Soviet Army at bay were fleeing for their lives. The Taliban now control three quarters of the country, and are poised to push through the blood-soaked Salang pass to the gates of central Asia.

The peace they have imposed in their wake is the iron regime of the fanatic. Within hours of arriving in Kabul they issued the decrees that have transformed life in Jalalabad, Kandahar and other cities under their puritanical rule. All girls' schools have been shut. Women have been ordered to remain at home, and not step outside unless completely veiled. All men have been ordered to grow flowing beards within six weeks. Television sets have been smashed, music banned. Western influence has been anathematised. Sharia law has been imposed in its most obscurantist interpretation: thieves will have their hands hacked off with a cleaver, women dressed immodestly will be beaten and adulterers stoned to death. Summary punishments have already been meted out as a warning.

Many residents of Kabul are aghast. About 70 per cent of the city's teachers are women; and few will now venture outside. Hospitals, clinics, food distribution will

suffer. The United Nations, long a lifeline to the besieged city, is also learning with a jolt of the Taliban determination to impose its will. The bodies of former president Najibullah and his brother, swinging from makeshift gallows for two days, were a reminder to the world, and interceding UN officials, that this militia force, springing from the hardline Afghan religious schools in Pakistan, is more than just another victorious faction. It is the attempt by zealots to reconstruct a society based on an all-consuming ideology — in this case, the reversion to a medieval interpretation of Islam. The last victorious guerrilla army to enforce its beliefs was the Khmer Rouge.

Throughout history, Afghanistan has been the mountainous battleground for clashing warlords and tribes, imperial powers and crusading ideologies. The Taliban victory has elements of all these weird machinations. The Taliban are Pashtuns, the traditional rulers of Kabul, and their hatred of rival factions representing ethnic Uzbeks or Tajiks goes deeper than ideology. Britain long retired from the Great Game, and the Soviet Union was more recently bloodied, but other outside powers still are trying to meddle. The Taliban message to all is the same: keep out. It is a message the world should heed, especially Pakistan. Islamabad may think that its early logistic and political support will open up new routes across the northern frontier, but may find it has created a force it cannot control. Heroin is not the only deadly substance from which the Taliban have thrived. Afghanistan's 20-year agony is not yet over; but its theocracy has no need now of the world's arms, advice or politics. No one who plays the Great Game has ever won.

UNWORLDLY PERFORMING FLEA

Spies should read comic fiction other than official reports

Wodehouse was no traitor. This is official — as if anybody still supposed that he was. The public records released today accuse him of vanity and folly, but acquit him of treason. They show the extraordinary lengths to which the government machine went to prevent his returning to England after the war. And, without their authors' meaning to, they illustrate the miasma of black propaganda as well as the gulf in comprehension between the administrative classes and the apolitical creator of a timeless fairyland.

At a time of national crisis, propaganda and its blind dupe, public opinion, hound those who are perceived to have escaped the danger. Auden, Benjamin Britten and H. W. Austin (who led the revival of English tennis) were pilloried for being in America when war broke out. Though Auden became an American citizen, Britten came home to compose *Peter Grimes* and "Bunny" Austin served in the American forces. The secret served in the American forces. The secret was recognised that such celebrities were more attractive symbols than politicians. So more attractive symbols than politicians. So Goebbels tried to tempt *The Blue Angel*, Marlene Dietrich back to the fatherland, and Thomas Mann's wartime broadcasts to the German people from America were a lifeline to reason for anybody still rational.

When Wodehouse was released in 1941, he foolishly agreed to make humorous broadcasts for an American company about the rigours of internment. Nobody who heard them, or who read *Wodehouse on Lord*, or who read *Wodehouse on Lord*, could have supposed that he was singing for the Nazis.

But the British propaganda machine was put to work to present him as a man who had served the enemy. However, even in 1941, Wodehouse was stoutly defended in the correspondence columns of *The Times*.

The contemporary documents show that officials and MIS did not believe that there was evidence to support charges of treason. Herbert Morrison, the Home Secretary, suggested they would be "too big a hammer for the cracking of his nut". But all wanted to avoid the populist clamour and exposure of their secret war if Wodehouse came home.

They failed to understand Wodehouse as completely as he failed to understand public opinion in Britain under the Blitz. His lack of interest in the ordinary world made him unable to grasp what went on in his first job at a bank. It got him into trouble with the Inland Revenue. And it led to his internment. The papers show that Wodehouse believed that the British Consul would telephone him if the Germans came too near to Le Touquet. Instead, German troops arrested him in his front garden.

That was a scene fit for the Master's pen, except for the bitterness it brought. The Wodehouse records are an argument for spies and politicians reading humorous fiction to balance official reports. But Wodehouse needs no official acquittal. He received that with his knighthood. And he received it unofficially when Jeeves and Bertie Wooster, Lord Emsworth and Psmith, entered that long gallery of living figures who make up the glory of English fiction.

Tax on waste as challenge to UK

From the Director of the Energy from Waste Association

Sir, Landfill tax — described as the first green tax — takes effect on October 1. From that date £7 per tonne will be charged on household waste sent to landfill sites, reducing its potentially damaging effects on the environment.

Waste disposal ideas must be translated into realistic strategies which are environmentally friendly and affordable. A recent report from MEL Research ("Assessment of Solid Waste Arisings", no 9506/11) shows a total potential resource of 75 million tonnes a year, offering ample scope for more recycling and energy recovery.

In many areas suitable power stations must be built. They are needed, together with reduced waste and higher recycling rates, to meet EU targets and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The Europeans have experience in designing waste-fired power stations that are well proven and economic.

If landfill costs do not rise sufficiently, taxation rates must be pushed up until the government target of recovering value from 40 per cent of municipal waste by 2005 (or even a higher target) is in sight.

Yours faithfully,
RAY PALIN, Director,
Energy from Waste Association,
92 Horseferry Road, SW1,
September 27.

Clarke's 'gaffe'

From Mr Gerald Frost

Sir, I am becoming deeply suspicious of a Chancellor of the Exchequer who, on tax and Europe (report, September 30; see also letters, same day), appears to be driven by the unusual ambition of wanting to lose his party the election.

As we have it on the Chancellor's own authority that any enemy of the Prime Minister's is an enemy of his, may we assume that he will shortly retire to a darkened room with a bottle of whisky and a loaded revolver?

Yours faithfully,
GERALD FROST,
Reform Club, Pall Mall, SW1,
September 30.

From Mr Hammond Smith

Sir, So we have now arrived at a situation that when a politician (K. Clarke) actually speaks the truth (about taxes) he is condemned for making a "gaffe". What more do we need to reinforce the general public's cynicism of politics and politicians?

Yours faithfully,
HAMMOND SMITH,
31 Dukes Drive, Leicester,
September 30.

Radon and lung cancer

From Professor S. H. U. Bowie, FRS, FRCG

Sir, The juxtaposition of your news reports of September 20 (earlier editions), "Daily dose of radiation 'beneficial'" and "Map shows spread of radon", should do much to dispel speculation about radon in dwelling houses causing lung cancer.

Research on mice and rats in the 1970s and 80s indicated that radiation doses "considerably larger than natural background given at low dose rates" could increase longevity (J. H. Fremlin, 1987). This finding is borne out by the studies in Japan referred to by the Vice-President of British Nuclear Fuel's US subsidiary.

The fact that Devon and Cornwall, known to have the lowest lung-cancer rates in the English counties, have the highest distribution of radon in the home demonstrates more clearly than any previously published evidence that there is no correlation between radon and lung cancer.

Yours faithfully,
S. H. U. BOWIE,
Tanyard Farm,
Clapton, Crewkerne, Somerset.

Rabies and quarantine

From Lady Fretwell

Sir, Mrs Angela Barkham (letter, September 27) asked how many animals have developed rabies whilst in quarantine over the past ten years.

Mrs Angela Browning, Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, in a Commons written reply on July 15 stated: "European bat lyssavirus 2 was isolated on July 6, 1996, from a bat found in Sussex. This is the only occasion in the last 25 years on which rabies has been confirmed by isolation of virus."

It is little wonder that the Danish diplomat was indignant about the death of his dog. This concern is shared by the 185,000 other pet owners whose dogs and cats have been subjected to six months' quarantine in the last 25 years, to no good purpose. Two thousand five hundred of them died, but not of rabies.

Yours faithfully,
MARY FRETWELL,
(Chairman), Passports for Pets,
20 Seymour Road, SW18,
September 27.

Business letters, page 31

Letters should carry a daytime telephone number. They may be faxed to 0171-782-8046.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1 Pennington Street, London E1 9KN Telephone 0171-782 5000

Proposed change of law on 'stalking'

From Mr Darryl Bickler

Sir, The proposed legislation to facilitate convictions of so-called stalkers (report, September 26) seems to me dangerous for two main reasons: any new law will involve a diminution of our legal rights and will inevitably further the institutionalisation of women in the role of the weaker sex.

There is already considerable existing legislation on physical assault and damage to property. In addition there are laws forbidding the use of threatening or abusive words or behaviour by any means of communication with the intention to cause harassment, alarm or distress. The Home Office's proposed Bill on "stalking" will remove the need to prove that there is any such intention.

Such a widening of the law will be problematic in my view because it will rely on individual susceptibility to the attentions of the accused. When such common standards are lost we all suffer a loss of legal rights because innocence and guilt cannot readily be established objectively.

The proposals will require that the conduct of the accused must be reasonably likely to cause the distress alleged. However in an atmosphere where women are deemed automatically to be vulnerable victims, almost any form of conduct could be interpreted as harassment necessitating the intervention of the courts. Many codes of conduct at work now include unwanted looks and pulling faces as examples of unacceptable harassment. Even the court process is considered by some to be too traumatic to allow the accused to defend themselves.

It is worth remembering that fear of crime is disproportionate to reality. Being "stalker aware" can only exacerbate the debilitating "stranger danger" culture. It is ironic that many women's groups are advocating the theory that women are victims of men and therefore need particular protection from the law. Far from presenting women as equals, this will portray women as helpless in the face of men behaving badly.

Yours etc,
DARRYL BICKLER,
(Legal researcher),
Freedom and Law,
c/o PO Box 7,
64 Goodge Street, W1,
September 26.

Morality and tax

From Mr M. C. Kennedy

Sir, Economists who moralise about the nation's debt should revise their theory of public finance. When Mr M. C. Fitzpatrick (letter, September 23) points out that net government debt works out at £16,000 per household he neglects to mention that it is owed entirely to ourselves.

Furthermore, it is much more likely to be rolled-over than paid back. The "burden" of the national debt may be equal to the amount spent on the NHS, but it is a transfer, not a loss of resources, the transfer being the interest paid by taxpayers to the owners of gilt-edged securities. The debt has been growing in size for some 300 years without presenting much of a problem so far.

When I am told that we should not "saddle" future generations with our debts I have to ask myself whether I would prefer that my parents' genera-

From Mr T. J. B. Pallister

Sir, Lord Donaldson (letter, September 20) refers to the problem of definition for a specific offence of stalking. The Victorian draftsman of the Conspiracy, and Protection of Property Act (1875) did not provide too bad a starting point. I quote Section 7 in part:

Every person who, with a view to compel any other person to abstain from doing or to do any act which such other person has a legal right to do or abstain from doing, wrongfully and without legal authority,

1. Uses violence to or intimidates such other person or his wife or children, or injures his property; or

2. Persistently follows such other person about from place to place; or

3. Watches or besets the house or other place where such other person resides, or works, or carries on business or happens to be, or the approach to such house or place shall be subject to fine or imprisonment on conviction.

Yours faithfully,
T. J. B. PALLISTER,
The Old Vicarage,
Tunstead, Norwich, Norfolk,
September 20.

From Mr Stanley Best

Sir, I suggest that the following form of words could be incorporated in a short Act of Parliament and that they might well serve not only to catch stalkers but others who make a nuisance of themselves, eg by frequent unwanted telephone calls. My suggested wording is:

It shall be an offence for any person persistently to press his or her attentions upon another in circumstances where he/she knows or ought reasonably to anticipate that his/her words and/or conduct are or is unwelcome to that other person or may be so and may cause to that other person vexation, anxiety or distress.

The above form avoids the complexity which an attempt to define stalking more precisely would involve. It is unlikely that the Crown Prosecution Service would take to trial any other than serious cases. I do not think that any judge or jury would have any difficulty in applying the wording.

Yours faithfully,
STANLEY BEST,
Bratton Chambers,
Temple, EC4,
September 26.

tion had not used debt-finance to pay for two world wars — or whether lower deficits in the last two decades would not have meant even higher unemployment than we actually experienced. The best rule for the public finances is to consider all their consequences and to make a judgment.

Cutting the budget deficit might reduce inflation, but it would also lower national output, reduce profits, increase poverty, add to the crime rate and lengthen the dole queue. A tax cut which raised the deficit would have opposite effects, and might be welcomed by future generations for having put their parents back to work.

There is a lot more to moralise about than the size of the national debt.

Yours etc,
M. C. KENNEDY,
University of Manchester,
School of Economic Studies,
Manchester M13 9PL,
September 23.

Childbirth and the law

From Professor Emeritus Geoffrey Chamberlain

Sir, I was saddened to read Margaret Jowitt's letter (September 25). After 40 years of working alongside midwives, both in the workplace and politically, I find it perplexing to see attitudes expressed which do little to facilitate the combined work of these two groups of professionals.

The Department of Health document *Changing Childbirth*, mentioned in the letter, has mostly been accepted by obstetricians and midwives. The judgments of obstetricians are acceptable to women and Caesarean section is not used indiscriminately. Many obstetricians do not like the

recent High Court ruling on Caesarean sections in principle but the doctors dealing with those individual women were doing their best for them and the babies they were looking after.

Obstetricians and midwives, working with a healthier group of women, have seen the rates of death of mothers and babies greatly reduced. One of the best measures of a contribution by professionals has been the lowering of foetal deaths in labour. This is a time when the professionals' alertness is most acute and actions can be taken to save the lives of babies.

Yours faithfully,
GEOFFREY CHAMBERLAIN,
Singleton Hospital,
Sketty, Swansea SA2 8QA.

Lady Lavery

From Mr Brendan Barrington

Sir, Eoghan Harris's salutary reminder (report, September 23) that Michael Collins became romantically involved with London society hostess, Lady Lavery, while negotiating the Anglo-Irish treaty appears to have created some confusion as to Lady Lavery's nationality.

Hazel Lavery, née Martyn, was born in Chicago and lived in the US until her late twenties, when she married the painter, John Lavery, and moved into his London home. Far from becoming an "Englishwoman", as your reporter states, she relished the social freedom then available to Americans in London society and played up her Irishness — she had distant Irish ancestors and her husband was from Belfast.

As Sínead McCool shows in her new biography, *Hazel: A Life of Lady Lavery (1880-1935)*, published by The Lilliput Press, Lady Lavery's support for some form of Irish independence did not always endear her to the British political establishment. Nevertheless, her salon became a meeting-place for British and Irish delegates to the 1921 treaty negotiations.

It was there that Lady Lavery met Michael Collins, and — beyond their much-discussed romantic involvement — entertained him at the same table with figures such as Churchill, Londonderry and Birkenhead, helping to create the atmosphere of mutual respect and, indeed, admiration without which Collins might never have shed the "terrorist" tag. McCool also shows that hours before Collins went to Downing Street to affirm his support for the treaty, he was at the Laverys' being urged by John and Hazel to do just that.

Incidentally, the caption under the painting of Michael Collins that accompanied the article should have credited the portrait to John Lavery. This and numerous other works by John Lavery (as well as a couple by Hazel) are currently on display in an exhibition at the Hugh Lane Municipal Gallery of Modern Art in Dublin, entitled *Hazel, Lady Lavery: Society and Politics*, through November 3.

Yours faithfully,
BRENDAN BARRINGTON,
(Assistant Editor),
The Lilliput Press,
4 Rosemount Terrace,
Arbour Hill, Dublin 7,
September 24.

Time to reunite Turner bequest

From Dr Selby Whittingham

Sir, Might not the rationalisation of the collections of the National Gallery and Tate Gallery (report, September 20) be extended by reuniting the Turner bequest, which continues to be divided between those two galleries?

The shutting of Turners back and forth between the two galleries has been suggested. That has quite rightly not been carried out, as it would create just the confusion which the Director of the National Gallery wishes to avoid — according to his quoted remark that it is "very important that the collections of this country are where the public expect them to be".

It would also not achieve what was Turner's evident aim, and the aim of anyone organising a retrospective one-man show, whether temporary or permanent, of showing works side by side and not a rule apart.

If works by Monet continue to be divided between the two galleries, that is now on a clear chronological basis, whereas the abstracting of key Turners by the National Gallery from the rest of Turner's bequest is a form of cherry-picking which Ruskin said was just what Turner abhorred. Unlike the Monets, the Turners were bequeathed by the artist to be a "gallery".

According to the recently written opinion by a QC the conditions of Turner's gift have never been fulfilled and the nation is therefore, even now, liable to forfeit it. It would be a pity if that happened as a result of the two galleries and others continuing to turn a blind eye to the facts.

Yours faithfully,
SELBY WHITTINGHAM,
(Joint Editor, J. M. W. Turner, RA),
Turner House,
153 Cromwell Road, SW5,
September 20.

Ashdown's patriotism

From Earl Russell

Sir, I am sorry to see Sir James Spicer, MP (letter, September 27), casting doubts on Paddy Ashdown's claim to patriotism. Ever since the word patriot came into use in the 17th century, it has tended to be the property of critics of the prevailing government. In the 17th century, the word was normally applied to those who disliked the government because they loved their country.

It is that tradition which Paddy Ashdown is claiming and it is a proud one.

Yours sincerely,
RUSSELL,
(Liberal Democrat Social Security Spokesperson),
House of Lords,
September 27.

'Burdened' teenagers

From Mrs Sheila Matthews

Sir, I was angered on reading Dr Sturteford's Medical Briefing, written alongside your coverage of the errant Roman Catholic bishop, "Burdened teenager may suffer for sins of father" (September 21).

So broadly to imply that children growing up in the absence of fathers may "develop anti-social characteristics", find it hard "to establish good future relationships" and never "mature completely" is condescending and hurtful. And what, I wonder, is "normal development"?

Any youngster reading such a patronising piece would be justified in feeling highly insulted.

Yours faithfully,
SHEILA MATTHEWS,
90 Wood Close, Windsor, Berkshire,
September 23.

From Mr B. A. Watson

Sir, For legal reasons the names of those accused of causing the death of Mr Philip Lawrence cannot be published (reports, September 25, 26). Conversely, the identity of the son of Bishop Roderick Wright has been widely publicised.

I accept that the announcement of the identity of the father of her son was made by the boy's mother and that the disclosure was not the result of a media intrusion.

Were those being tried for Mr Lawrence's killing a few years older their names would be public knowledge — but because of their youth they are "protected". If legal protection is provided in the case of youths accused of a criminal offence, should not the same be provided for young innocents?

Yours faithfully,
B. A. WATSON,
The Homestead, Raskelf Road,
Easingwold, North Yorkshire,
September 27.

Animal insights

From Mrs Dorothy Bailey

Sir, I agree with Mr John Burton's observations that a dog's "psychic" achievements may be the result of picking up clues from its owner (letter, September 24).

When we tidy up the top of our coffee table our dog immediately goes to the window to see who is coming.

Yours sincerely,
DOROTHY BAILEY,
7 Borrowdale,
Wickham, Newcastle upon Tyne,
September 29.

OBITUARIES

SHUSAKO ENDO

Shusako Endo, Japanese novelist, died on September 29 aged 73. He was born on March 27, 1923.

A Japanese who converted to Roman Catholicism, Shusako Endo was a curious hybrid. But the tension between his nationality and his faith informed his work. As one of a tiny minority — there are less than half a million Catholics in Japan — he grew up an outsider in his own nation and this cultural distance was a writer's strength. From a remote, almost incisively to explore the conflicts between Christian monotheism and Japanese Buddhism, between faith and faithlessness, between the modern materialistic world and traditional beliefs and cultural values.

Though his work is in many ways quintessentially Japanese — spare, elegant and both symbolic and poetically descriptive — in novels such as *Scandal* (1988) or *Deep River* (1995) he took disorientated orientals as his subject. Nor was he unafraid of tackling occidental themes. In *The Sea and the Poison* (1953) — the novel which firmly established his reputation in Japan — he approached the concept of guilt. Much has been made of the fact that the Japanese have a notion of shame, but their language has no single word to denote guilt. In *The Sea and the Poison*, Endo examines the moral atmosphere in which, during the war, Japanese doctors practised vivisection on American airmen, and asks questions about responsibility and guilt.

Predictably, Endo was often compared to Graham Greene — his admirer and correspondent. Like Greene, he took a pronounced moral stance and often, too, seemed to share a profound sense of Catholic pessimism in confronting man's bleak search for salvation through God. Endo, again like Greene, occasionally

found himself on the wrong side of the Church. His finest novel *Silence* (1966) — often compared with *The Power and the Glory* — is based on the historical figure of the Portuguese Jesuit, Ferreira, who apostatised under torture. It is still banned in some Japanese Catholic schools. But this novel sold more than a million copies in Japan before its translation into English a decade later and did more than anything to establish Endo as one of his country's leading novelists. He went on to confirm his international reputation and his work was translated into more than 25 languages.

Many considered him a contender for the 1994 Nobel Prize. It was, in the end awarded to his compatriot Kenzaburo Oe. But Endo was characteristically modest. There were several Japanese writers greater than he, he said, it was just that there were no translators careful enough to capture the essence of their work.

Typically self-deprecating, Endo saw himself as the common man in Japanese folklore — lazy, curious, loud-mouthed and full of earthy scepticism. "I see no point in being a workaholic," he once said. "Art grows when there is laziness." Nonetheless, despite protracted illness, he continued to write prolifically until the end of his life.

Shusako Paul Endo was born in Tokyo in the middle of the devastating earthquake of 1923, but he was brought up in Dalian, an imperial enclave of Japan on the Manchurian mainland where his father worked in a bank. His parents' marriage, however, was not a harmonious one. Its harrowing disintegration was to affect Endo deeply and memories of it echoed through later short stories. When it ended eventually in divorce, Endo and his mother returned to Japan where they were found lodging with a Roman Catholic aunt.

It was under this aunt's influence that Endo's mother, at a time of hardship,

turned to the Roman Catholic faith for solace. Endo too, at the age of 11, was baptised into the same faith, though he did not seriously consider or believe in its precepts, until he was much older.

At first he intended to study medicine and was briefly a student at Waseda University. Medical practices were to become a key metaphor in his work. But he soon abandoned his plans to become a doctor and won a place at Keio University instead to read French literature.

As a believer in a foreign faith, Endo felt ostracised as a student, always suspect and subjected to stringent checks. He also felt a deep loathing for his country's militaristic tendencies — the politics of Japan at that time, he said, made it impossible for him to love his country — and he often agonised over whether he could bring himself to fight for Japan. His military service at the end of the Second World War was, thankfully for him, brief.

In the postwar world he rejoiced for the first time in freedom of speech and conscience, though he believed that his country had lost something vital at the same time — the ancestor-based family system which had underpinned social ethics. In the void, he said, people turned not to spiritual but to material things.

In 1950 Endo became one of the first Japanese students to be awarded a French government scholarship. He travelled to Lyons where he studied the work of the modern French Catholic writers: Georges Bernanos, Julien Green and François Mauriac. "Optimistically I began to believe I had taken the first steps towards acquiring an understanding of Europe," he wrote in his introduction to *Foreign Studies*. "And yet, in about the middle of my second year I learnt that towering beyond the hill I had scaled lay an enormous mountain." Confronted with the richness of the occidental cultural heritage he sensed, as he put it, "a certain unfathomable distance".

Yet he remained convinced that communication was possible between the two cultures and later he was to take upon himself the duty of trying to make Christianity comprehensible to the Eastern mind. He even wrote *A Life of Jesus* in an attempt to show that the Christian tradition was not quite as alien as the Japanese might have assumed. "Christianity tries to communicate with Buddhism and vice versa and that is why I feel confident that we can reach each other."

After four years in France, Endo returned to Japan and in 1954 won the Akutagawa Prize for his first novel *The White Man*. The controversial *The Sea and the Poison* followed three years later and then *Volcano*, a novel whose protagonist is an unfringed Catholic priest.

The publication of *When I Whistle* marked a shift in his stance from the solemn almost dark outlook of his earlier novels to a more balanced play of light and shadow. Wryly comic, it is based on the three years which he spent confined to a hospital bed. Endo was beset by ill health throughout his life and underwent a number of operations including the removal of one of his lungs.

His illness, however, never prevented him from writing and he published more than 20 works all written — paradoxically for a member of a nation which spawned the electronic age — longhand and in pencil.

He was also well known in his country for his lively newspaper columns and had a popular following as a deflating and self-effacing critic. He was also the host of a television show.

Endo did much for the artistic climate of his Japan. He was president of the Japanese branch of PEN and ran his own amateur theatrical group, Giza. He also devoted much of his time to voluntary work for various hospital charities.

He is survived by his wife Junko and their son.



REAR-ADMIRAL IAN McLAUGHLAN

Rear-Admiral Ian McLaughlan, CB, DSC and Bar, Admiral Commanding Reserves, 1970-72, died on September 18 aged 77. He was born on May 2, 1919.



McLaughlan (with dog) on the bridge of the frigate *Flint Castle*

AWARDED two DSCs and four times mentioned in dispatches in two major wars, Ian McLaughlan had an adventurous career in destroyers. He was sunk twice, first during the disastrous Dieppe raid, and the second time on a Murmansk convoy. He was to go on to fight in the Korean War, during which the Royal Navy was active in bombarding shore installations, and was later in the thick of the naval action at Suez.

Educated at St Paul's School, Ian David McLaughlan joined the Royal Navy in 1937 and after a brief tour in the anti-aircraft cruiser *Cairo* early in the war, he was appointed to the Hunt class destroyer *Berkeley*. She was one of the 39 destroyers that helped to create the "miracle of Dunkirk", from where, during May and early June 1940 under heavy air attacks, 338,226 Allied soldiers were rescued and brought to British ports. Subsequently, the col-

lapse of French resistance required speedy action to be taken to evacuate further personnel (90,000 more British, French, Polish, Czech and Belgian troops were evacuated from Normandy and Bordeaux) and useful shipping from all the ports between the Gironde and Spain. *Berkeley*

distributed senior naval officers to these ports and eventually in mid-June found herself up the Gironde at Bordeaux acting as a wireless link to the Admiralty.

Here the First Lord and the First Sea Lord were unsuccessfully trying to persuade Admiral Darlan to move the whole

French fleet out of enemy reach. *Berkeley* left Bordeaux as late as June 19 with the British Embassy and consular staffs, as well as Polish and Czech troops, on board. *Berkeley* was subsequently on convoy escort in the Channel and North Sea and McLaughlan was awarded his first DSC.

In August 1942 she formed part of the escort for the ill-fated assault on Dieppe. Escorting destroyers approached as close as possible to the beach in support; several were damaged and *Berkeley* was sunk by aircraft. McLaughlan had a distinct recollection of a shell grazing his cheek.

After a recuperative period on the staff of the training school *King Alfred* at Lancing, McLaughlan was appointed to the destroyer *Hardy* and took part in the notorious Arctic convoys to Murmansk. In January 1944, Convoy JW56 with 20 merchantmen and 11 escorts had to put into Akureyi, Iceland, to avoid a violent storm.

Reported by agents, they then ran into a wolf pack of ten U-boats off Bear Island; in a fierce battle three ships were sunk. Russian destroyers reinforced the escort, but *Hardy* was so badly damaged by an acoustic torpedo from UZ78 that she sank and her crew had to be rescued by the *Venus*. The return voyage saw a powerful group of 37 merchantmen and 23 escorts evading nine U-boats and getting home safely.

Transferred as second-in-command to the fast minelayer *Apollo*, McLaughlan took part in minelaying operations designed to protect the Normandy landings. On D-Day plus one, his ship transported General Eisenhower and Admiral Ramsay to inspect the beaches. On May 13, 1945, *Apollo* escorted the cruiser *Devonshire* which carried Crown Prince Olav of Norway back to Oslo. Hodgkinson's war ended with him as second-in-command of the destroyer *Chevron*.

The frigate *Flint Castle* in home waters was the first of his numerous commands. In 1950 he was in the Far East in command of the destroyer *Concord* at the start of what is too often forgotten as a major British naval war — the Korean War. The British were responsible for all naval operations on the west side of the peninsula. *Concord* executed many shore bombardments and, in November 1950, assisted the evacuation of the American 8th Army from Chirix in the face of the massive Chinese counter-attack over the 38th parallel

which nearly pushed UN forces into the sea. McLaughlan was awarded his second DSC for these operations.

Promoted commander in 1951, he attended the US Armed Forces Staff College before being given two further happy and successful destroyer commands — *Chieftain* and *Chevron*. These were mostly in the Mediterranean. A contemporary remarked that McLaughlan was one of the best ship-handlers he had ever seen; Malta was always the Mediterranean Fleet showcase and McLaughlan's stylish charge backwards up Sliema Creek to a berth between head-and-stern buoys was always worth watching.

In *Chevron* he was awarded his fourth mention in dispatches for his actions in November 1956 in support of the British and French attempt to re-establish control over the Suez Canal after President Nasser's unilateral takeover. At Port Said some blockships prevented access to the chosen landing points for tanks and commandos; it was *Chevron* which organised minesweepers and a safe passage to the nearest alternative fishing port.

After promotion to captain, his subsequent appointments included a job in the Plans Division of the Admiralty and two further sea commands, the Second Frigate Squadron and the guided missile destroyer *Hampshire*. In 1967 he was again in the Far East as the Chief of Staff to the Commander Far East Fleet where, amid the other operational matters, he organised the run-down and handover of the Singapore dockyard to their Government.

Widely noted for his equable and unflappable temperament, particularly when under stress at sea, McLaughlan was also seen by some as "quite a hard man, critical, a man who understood clearly what he wanted from others, a most able Chief of Staff".

He was appointed CB in 1970 and his final tour was as Admiral Commanding Naval Recruiting. Retiring with a year's disability pension, he interested himself in local affairs in East Sussex. He leaves his widow Charity, and two daughters.

WILLIAM CLIFFORD

William Clifford, CB, CBE, former solicitor to the Department of Health and Social Security, died on September 3 aged 87. He was born on July 30, 1909.

WILL CLIFFORD was one of those civil servants brought into the new Ministry of National Insurance after the Second World War to lay the foundations of the welfare state.

As a young senior legal assistant he became deeply involved in preparing for what became known in Whitehall as the "Appointed Day" — July 5, 1948. This saw the introduction of not only the National Health Service (NHS) but a network of universal benefits.

Clifford cut his teeth as a Whitehall lawyer on some of the complicated legislation then required to transfer to the new system those already receiving benefits under the old Workmen's Compensation Act. Endowed with a good legal brain, Clifford was to become a leading draftsman in social security as successive governments introduced subordinate legislation, almost annually, during the next quarter of a century.

His reward came in 1968 when he won the job of solicitor to the newly enlarged DHSS, in charge of up to 80 Civil Service lawyers, until his retirement in 1974 aged 65.

Yet for all his expertise as a drafting lawyer, Will Clifford had first aspired to become a diplomat.

William Henry Morton Clifford was born at Campbeltown, Argyllshire, the son of a successful Glasgow architect, and retained a lifelong pride in his Scots background. He later discovered while researching his family, however, that his forebears had originated in Co Wexford — while Will Clifford himself was to spend most of his life in England.

From prep school in Littlehampton, he won a scholarship to Tonbridge School, then a bursary to Corpus Christi, Cambridge. He read classics for the first two years, switched to modern languages for a further two, and rowed for his college. Clifford abandoned his

plans to enter the Foreign Office when his mother, his last close relative at that time, fell fatally ill. Reluctant to risk being sent abroad while she was dying, he turned to the law and was admitted as a solicitor in 1936.

Political insecurity at home and abroad in the 1930s persuaded him to join the Civil Service rather than enter private practice and he worked in the legal department of the General Post Office (GPO) until the war.

Joining the Army in the ranks, Clifford then served in a searchlight battery before being commissioned and transferred to military intelligence. In 1944 he was moved to a staff job on the Army Council secretariat in the War Office and had reached the rank of major before being demobilised.

Clifford returned only briefly to the GPO. The head of its legal department pointed out to him that because of his comparatively late start and wartime service, there was a queue of younger men who were now senior to him. That was in the days when they waited their turn for promotion.

Recognising Clifford's ability, his departmental head recommended him for the Ministry of National Insurance in the hope that he would have a chance to shine in a new department.

On retiring from Whitehall, Clifford became legal consultant at the Civil Service College and lectured there on a part-time basis for the next five years.

He was not only well-respected but well-liked. Despite his size (he was over six foot four), he was by nature a shy, private man who enjoyed company but was happy to let others do the talking. His outside interests included sailing, genealogy and music — especially opera. He frequently attended Glyndebourne during the season and made regular pilgrimages to the Wedford festival.

He met his wife Katharine through her brother, a friend at Cambridge. She died last year, however, a year before what would have been their diamond wedding, and Will Clifford is survived by their two daughters and a son.

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MARGATE

The following Letter, written by a Gentleman at Margate to his friend in London, may be agreeable to the public:

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Margate, September 17, 1788

The town is crowded, not so much however by vacationers as by many who don't know what to do with their time. The rooms are spacious and elegant, where there are balls three times a week, the amusement is undeniably innocent, as there are generally some reverend divines who dance to show they are neither dissenters nor methodists. Here are abundance of Misses, who complain of want of partners, which they charge to the impropriety of many, who, wishing to hold the tenure of youth as long they can, continue to dance, while the young Misses insist they have mistaken the matter, and should have given it up long since.

The card rooms are generally filled, but whether there are any black legs I cannot say: A great trade is carried on here at the public libraries, not indeed in the sale of books, but in toys, for each library is a toyshop, where all their wares are disposed of by the dice, a science in which the young Misses are happily initiated [sic], much to the improvement of their minds, being enabled by practice and observa-

ON THIS DAY

October 1, 1788

Prewar Margate was a favourite holiday resort for Londoners. Even today the town attracts crowds; day trippers arrive in that modern Dilly — the air conditioned, luxury coach.

who come here in Dilly, and those who come in the Hope, the influx by the latter is surprising, often an hundred at a time, who come with five or ten guineas each, and return so soon as it is spent, and give way to a new set. This is a great relief to a class of people who want a little relaxation, and I think it must be pleasing to humanity to see so many enjoying it. — These boys are likewise a great convenience for the conveyance of Gentlemen's baggage.

Here are three or four boarding houses, with convenient lodgings, where I understand excellent tables are kept on very reasonable terms and frequented by genteel company.

The markets are abundantly supplied, and every thing so good as would keep an epicure in good humour, or decorate the table of a Lord-Mayor, and added to this, Benson gives notice now and then that he has purchased a turtle, merely to oblige the company, which for the benefit of the public he disposes of at eight shillings a quart.

There is natural civility in the inhabitants of Margate, improved by their intercourse with the great variety of visitors here, and I am willing to pay them the tribute due to their honesty, which I think appears in their intercourse...

Yours, &c.

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FRANCHISING

FOCUS

Franchising can provide you with a safe business — if you're careful. David Churchill introduces a three-page report

Business boom in franchise sector

Britain's franchising business appears to be one of the most buoyant small business sectors of the mid-1990s, with the latest figures from the British Franchise Association (BFA) showing sales through recognised franchise operations at £5.9 billion last year, an increase of just more than 7 per cent on 1994.

Nine out of ten franchisees covered by the survey report that they were trading profitably last year, compared to 70 per cent in 1991 at the onset of recession. The proportion reporting losses has fallen from 14 per cent to 4 per cent over the same period.

With a franchise failure rate estimated at one in every 20, the franchising route offers greater security for those willing to invest their redundancy cheques, life savings or inheritances. This is in contrast to figures suggesting that at least one in every four new business

start-ups in general fails in its first year, with up to 70 per cent going bust within their first five years.

Enthusiasm for franchising is expected to be shown at this week's annual National Franchise Exhibition at the National Exhibition Centre in Birmingham (from Friday, October 4 to Sunday, October 6), which is likely to attract a record number of visitors, with 30 per cent more exhibitors attending than last year.

"Anyone who is thinking about becoming a franchisee — or business people researching franchising as a way of expanding their own companies — can find out everything they need to know, taking advantage of all the free advice that is available during the show from bankers, lawyers, consultants and accountants," says Steve Thomas, the exhibition's event director.

But would-be franchisees (the people who buy and



Franchisors showing their wares to franchisees at the annual National Franchise Exhibition at the National Exhibition Centre in Birmingham

operate the franchise) and franchisors (the companies who develop and own the system) should beware some of the hype. While the franchise sector has a number of substantial and well-run franchise operations, such as McDonald's, Dyno-Rod and Printaprint among many others, there is another more worrying side to the business.

According to CAMC, the

Oxford-based consultants, this consists of an "unwholesome concoction of cowboy outfits, lookalike versions of better-known and run enterprises, weak conceptions bolstered by over-optimism and grand claims, together with born-again failures rising from the ashes of previous failures."

Becoming a franchisee, therefore, is not a guaranteed route to financial security and

individual success. Taking on a franchise with one of the more reputable and well-established franchise operations, and raising finance through a bank or other institution, reduces the potential risk. But it is by no means a guarantee of success.

A new report into franchising, published last week by the City University's Business School, also highlights some of

the problems facing the sector. Professor Christina Fulop, the report's author, says there are concerns about the quality of people recruited by companies to operate as franchisees.

"More stringent initial recruitment by franchisors is essential to minimise turnover of franchisees and to reduce legal disputes and the many other sources of friction," she says. While some measures

have already been taken, she says, "such rigour needs to be maintained, even if the marketplace appears more buoyant."

Professor Fulop has also identified a new problem among well-established and successful franchisees. "Those franchisees whose lifestyle expectations have been fulfilled suffer from diminished drive, ambition and entrepreneur-

ship and can be a drain on all the franchisees in the network," she says. "Since this group is likely to become more widespread as the franchise network matures, maintaining the enthusiasm of franchisees may soon become the most difficult part of the operation."

Yet franchising remains an important part of the economy. Mr Thomas says that franchising is now bigger than the whole of the energy sector, including water, gas and utilities, and is almost as big as the Armed Forces.

The BFA figures, produced jointly with NatWest Bank, show that more than 222,000 people are directly employed in franchising and another 25,000 estimated as having indirect employment as a result.

London and the South East continue to be the main focus of franchise activity, followed by the West Midlands, South West and North West. Just over a fifth of franchisors operate in other parts of Europe.

There seems little doubt that the franchise format is here to stay, indicated by the same proportion of franchisee renewal contracts — two thirds — in 1995 as in 1991, in spite of the unfavourable economic climate in between.

● The National Franchise Exhibition information line: 01203 426461.
● Overview of the Franchise Marketplace 1990-1995 by Professor Christina Fulop, price £25, is available from Sarah Finch, City University Business School, Froisher Crescent, Barbican Centre, London EC2Y 8HB (071-477 8604).

Molly Maid cleans up

Sales are high for a franchise with a fresh approach to housework



Pam Bader, chief of Molly Maid and of the BFA

The Molly Maid domestic cleaning company began operating in the UK in 1985 and now has franchises covering 40 areas, with total sales approaching £3 million a year.

The company started in Canada in 1979 and it introduced a new concept in home cleaning to Britain, where many householders relied on the services of a traditional, British "charlady" who popped in for a couple of hours to vacuum, dust the shelves, clean up the kitchen and charged at an hourly rate.

Homeowners were not used to Molly Maid's professional service, which is provided by a team of two uniformed staff, turning up in a liveried car, having given a written estimate of the cost of a house clean.

Pam Bader, Molly Maid's chief executive, concedes that the company had to overcome the charlady image to succeed. "It was difficult for our first franchisees because they were charging for the job per house and not on an hourly rate. The public has taken a while to get used to the idea of profession-

alism in a domestic cleaning service."

Ms Bader, who is also chairwoman of the British Franchise Association, adds that demand has increased rapidly, largely because more British women are working and have less time for housework, and because the disposable income of many families is rising. The domestic cleaning market in the UK is now estimated to be worth about £1.9 billion a year.

Molly Maid, which also operates in America and Japan, has 32 franchises covering 40 areas in England and Scotland, with six more being launched this year. The firm, based in Windsor, Berkshire, has a business agreement with Ford for the supply of vehicles.

It costs £7,500 to set up a franchise lasting ten years — about half is the franchise fee and the remainder is used to start up and buy equipment and materials. Franchisees pay an annual royalty of 8 per cent of their turnover, plus 2 per cent towards the cost of advertising.

They use the firm's business systems, which are accredited to the quality standard ISO9002, and receive on-going training in accounts, VAT registration, site and area selection, employment law, marketing and sales. They also get help and advice from field support staff.

Ms Bader has been with Molly Maid for ten years. She is reluctant to estimate the average charge for cleaning a house, saying each job and each house is different and the cost varies accordingly. But each team of two cleaning staff is capable of cleaning five or six homes a day.

She says the people recruited to run the franchises have business acumen and want to succeed. "They are high achievers," Molly Maid's sales are up 23 per cent over the past year and Ms Bader says that the firm wants to expand its number of franchises in order to maintain its market dominance in the UK domestic cleaning industry.

CRAIG SETON

Phone lines are open 9am-5pm Monday-Friday and 10am-2pm Saturday, excluding Bank Holidays. Midland Bank plc is an affiliate member of the British Franchise Association. John and Louise are fictional characters but their story is based on real Midland customers.



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A management buy out meant a fresh challenge for a Red Star executive

Putting faith into parcels

John Wheeler, a former sales executive at Red Star Parcels, seized the opportunity when the private company, formerly part of British Rail, opted to make franchising an integral part of its business strategy.

Earlier this year Mr Wheeler, 41, left the company when he bought the Red Star parcel point based at Heathrow airport, a business that includes a second parcels centre at Feltham, Middlesex, and covers such areas as Harrow, Wembley, Pinner and Edgware.

He says: "I thought it was a really good opportunity. I know the business inside out, the company has a good brand name and the rail network it uses is a unique selling point that no other carrier has. I would not have taken it on if I didn't think it was a good investment."

Red Star operates same day and early next day collection and delivery. It has access to the nationwide rail network which it uses in combination with air and road transport.

It handled more than two million parcels in 1994-95, when its turnover was £20 million. The company was sold to a management buy-out team in September last year which then decided that franchising was an ideal way to



John Wheeler: I thought it was a really good opportunity and a good investment

increase its market penetration in the highly competitive express delivery market. The company has more than 200 rail-based parcel points in 78 collection and delivery areas that are being franchised. Sixteen areas have already been sold to franchisees and over the next two years the firm is looking for entrepreneurs to take on the rest.

Franchisees need funding of between about £20,000 and £65,000, depending on the size and type of Red Star operation they take on.

More than 60 franchisees are still available, based around

existing parcel points at railway stations. They are in three categories:

□ Collection and delivery of parcels within an area, with Red Star managing the local parcel point.

□ A parcel-point franchise, in which the franchisee runs and manages the parcel point as well as collection and delivery in an area.

□ A parcel-point franchise that allows the franchisee to handle other delivery work.

Mr Wheeler has taken over a small staff, that includes three drivers, as part of the deal and leases vehicles from

Red Star. He has recently employed a sales executive to help the business grow. The company provides sales and operational support, start-up and new product training, business advice, uniforms and software.

Nick Griffiths, Red Star's franchise development manager, says: "The most suitable candidates for franchises will be people who have successfully run a related business in the past. We are looking for entrepreneurial people who understand sales."

CRAIG SETON

Pros and cons of linking up with a famous chain

Buying-in to a good brand may bring profits, but it can create misery too, says David Churchill

The typical would-be franchisee used to be male, married with children, white-collar and using mainly savings to finance his first franchise business. Such a profile no longer fits. The harsh years of recession and the explosion of franchises aimed at women, have transformed the picture. Those wanting to take up a franchise now come from all walks of life, ages, gender and backgrounds.

What they all perceive is a way of moving into self-employment and ownership without some of the drawbacks of going it alone. A good franchisor offers its franchisees continued marketing and training support, a well-known brand name, the benefit of previous experience and a "safety-net" if things start to go wrong. The loneliness of the small-business operator is, to some extent, mitigated by being part of a chain, with a close relationship with the franchisor — although some franchisees find this closeness irritating and prefer eventually to branch out on their own.

The relationship some franchisees have with their franchisors can be fraught in other ways. Franchisees are often unhappy if they are asked to change their operating proce-

dures at the request of the franchisor. Equally, they dislike the absence of flexibility in cases where sourcing of supplies has to come from the franchisor and are suspicious of the mark-up charged.

Some franchisees are also frustrated at restrictions imposed on the number of outlets they can own, a restriction often required by the franchisor to prevent the potential power that multi-unit franchisees would acquire.

For their part, franchisors are unhappy at the way some franchisees resent paying an on-going royalty or management fee once the business is successful. This is known as the "three-year itch syndrome", typically the time when franchisees start to grumble.

What makes a good franchisee? "Franchising works best for those who are prepared to live by the work ethic," says Peter Stern, senior franchise manager at NatWest Bank. "But the need to learn the basics of time management and selling are also two very

important factors for a successful franchisee."

The biggest cause of failure among franchisees is a lack of basic business expertise and a poor understanding of sales and marketing. Potential franchisees have to establish whether they have the emotional and physical stamina to work many hours to establish a business, and can take the lack of security brought on by the absence of a pay cheque. In addition, it is important that the would-be franchisee discusses with his or her partner the hard work and commitment needed to make a franchise successful. Both may need to put in a great deal of work and it may be that the financial strain in the short term and possibly long hours are simply not worth it.

Once satisfied that you have the right attitude to becoming a franchisee, you then have to decide what sort of franchise operation you want to move into. Do you, for example, want to run a fast-food outlet, with unsocial hours or be constantly on call for a service

business such as drain-clearing?

Choosing the franchisor is also difficult. It is possible to tell a lot about a franchising company by looking at how long it has been in business, its financial strength (including credit rating) and the bank references it offers. Potential franchisees should ask about its plans, how selective it is in choosing franchisees and how successful these become.

Ask to talk to some of its franchisees at random. Find out about the whole range of the franchised product or service — including advertising, any essential machinery and administration. Consider whether you would buy the finished product or service on the open market.

Membership of the British Franchise Association is a key element to look out for from a franchisor, since the association works hard to weed out any rogue operators.

The British Franchise Association, Thames View, Newton Road, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire, RG9 1HG (01491 578020, Fax: 01491 57517). The BFA publishes an information pack for individuals at £19.50 including P&P. For companies, the information pack costs £37.50.

From pubs to printers, the route to riches

● HAIRDRESSERS, phone retailers, delivery services, print specialists and publishers are among the finalists of the Franchise of the Year award, sponsored by the British Franchise Association and Midland Bank, to be announced on Thursday.

● Northallerton hairdresser Wilson Derbyshire at 26 is the youngest of nine finalists competing for a share of the £10,000 prize money. He operates a Saks hairdressing and beauty salon, still finding time to raise more than £40,000 for local charities.

● Graham and Merryl Cornhill operate the Mobile Phone Centre in Colchester. They sold their home to take on the franchise, and now have a turnover of £4 million from seven outlets.

● Richard and Kim Bird, have achieved a turnover of £4 million with their City Link urgent deliveries services in Bristol and Swindon. "The Birds have creatively exploited and developed business within their area," says Cathryn Haynes, Midland Bank's national franchise manager.

FINALISTS

● Two print franchises have also made the final. Terry Woods has operated the Kall Kwik Printing Centre on Chiswick High Road since 1984 and is the first Kall Kwik franchisee to pass £1 million annual turnover. Andrew Murdoch, with a Printaprint franchise at Barking in Essex, recovered from a drastic loss of business in 1990 when the town centre was re-routed, to achieve a turnover approaching £500,000.

● Jean and John Taylor took over a rural pub in Carrs Green, Inskip, Lancashire and operated it as a Greenalls Inn franchise, the Derby Arms. Greenalls was the first pub chain to franchise its operation.

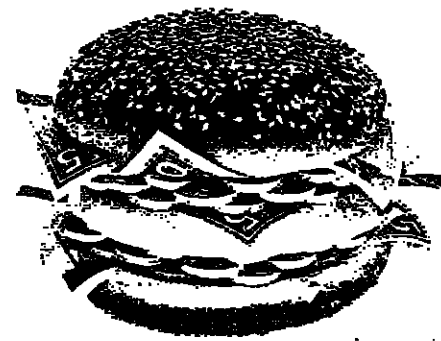
● South Wales businessman Huw Smith struggled with his own cleaning business before joining the Rainbow cleaning franchise enabled him to grow his business. Now, after 20 months, he employs a staff of seven.

● Another cleaning franchise couple, John and Julia

Ford from Ashford in Kent, operate three Servicemaster franchised territories and hope to follow in the footsteps of last year's award winner, also a Servicemaster franchisee.

● Wimbledon businesswoman Sandra Redmond operates a Molly Maid domestic cleaning franchise. Pam Bader, Molly Maids UK chief executive, says "Sandra has ensured that the financial control of her business is second to none, producing a good profit and using the assets to their full potential."

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Banking on ways to raise capital

COMPETITION among the high street banks for a slice of the franchise action is growing as the economy picks up and borrowers search for start-up finance. David Churchill writes.

Yet while the banks remain the primary source of franchise finance, willing to lend up to two-thirds of the cost of a franchise investment, some franchisors and borrowers find that they can either be too restrictive in their lending terms or apply them haphazardly across Britain.

Franchisors, for example, claim that the banks do not make enough use of their head-office expertise in franchising, so individual branch managers make contrary decisions on whether to lend money.

"I would like the branch managers of banks to take more notice of a recommendation that comes down from the franchise department," says one franchisor quoted in the City University Business School's new study of franchising.

Franchisors also believe there should be better terms for lending to qualified franchisees, because of the lower risks involved, while franchisees themselves — in common with all small business start-ups — are disparaging of the banks' lack of understanding of cash-flow and other problems.

Even so, dealing with a bank is generally regarded as a sounder way of raising finance than trying alternative lenders. The high street banks have been involved in lending to small businesses, including franchisees, for many years and therefore do have some considerable expertise despite the criticisms.

NatWest, for example, set up a dedicated franchise department in 1981, followed by Lloyds Bank in 1982, the Midland in 1983 and the Royal Bank of Scotland in 1984.

Peter Stern, NatWest's senior franchise manager, says: "There is a much greater understanding now about what franchising is and what it has to offer."

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MOON sets 10:51 am	MOON rises 8:36 pm	

next quarter October 4

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THE TIMES

2

INSIDE SECTION

2

TODAY



ARTS

Gene Wilder: a funny thing on his way to the theatre
PAGES 36-38



LAW

Two men and a baby: what is the legal aspect?
PAGES 39-43



SPORT

Isn't it time to come back to England, Jürgen Klinsmann?
PAGES 45-52

TELEVISION AND RADIO

PAGES 50, 51

BUSINESS EDITOR Lindsay Cook

TUESDAY OCTOBER 1 1996

Eurotunnel saved from insolvency

By JONATHAN PRYNN, TRANSPORT CORRESPONDENT

EUROTUNNEL has stepped back from the abyss of insolvency after a marathon weekend round of talks with its bankers that brought the company close to a refinancing deal.

Shares in the debt-laden Channel Tunnel operator were suspended yesterday on the London, Paris and Brussels stock markets "pending an announcement", although the company refused to make any further comment.

The weekend negotiations are believed to have removed several key stumbling blocks standing in the way of a refinancing, and made it possible for there to be an announcement on a deal before the end of next week.

City sources said that while outstanding issues remained to be settled, all the elements of a deal had been agreed in principle. "There is still a gap between the company and the banks but it is bridgeable," said one. The 46 biggest Eurotunnel lenders are expected to meet at the end of the week to consider the latest proposals.

The 112p suspension price values the company, which stopped paying interest on its debts last September, at around £1 billion, compared with its £9 billion of borrowings. The shares have rallied strongly since the spring, when they fell to a low of 62p.

The breakthrough came as two French court-appointed mediators who have been trying to broker an agreement between the company and its 225 lenders, began preparing their report for Jean-Pierre Mattei, the President of the commercial tribunal of Paris.

The President, who has the power to put Eurotunnel into receivership, sent in the mediators, Lord Wakeham and Robert Badinter, in February. Their mandate, which expired last night, had twice been extended to give them more time to find a deal to save the company.

The court is expected to reprimand the two sides for failing to reach an agreement by the September 30 deadline but is likely to stop short of measures that would trigger insolvency. "The only people that would gain from that would be the lawyers," said one City analyst.

City sources said the weekend negotiations centred on the terms of a complex refinancing package that would see up to £1.5 billion of debt swapped for equity, giving the banks up to 49 per cent of the company.

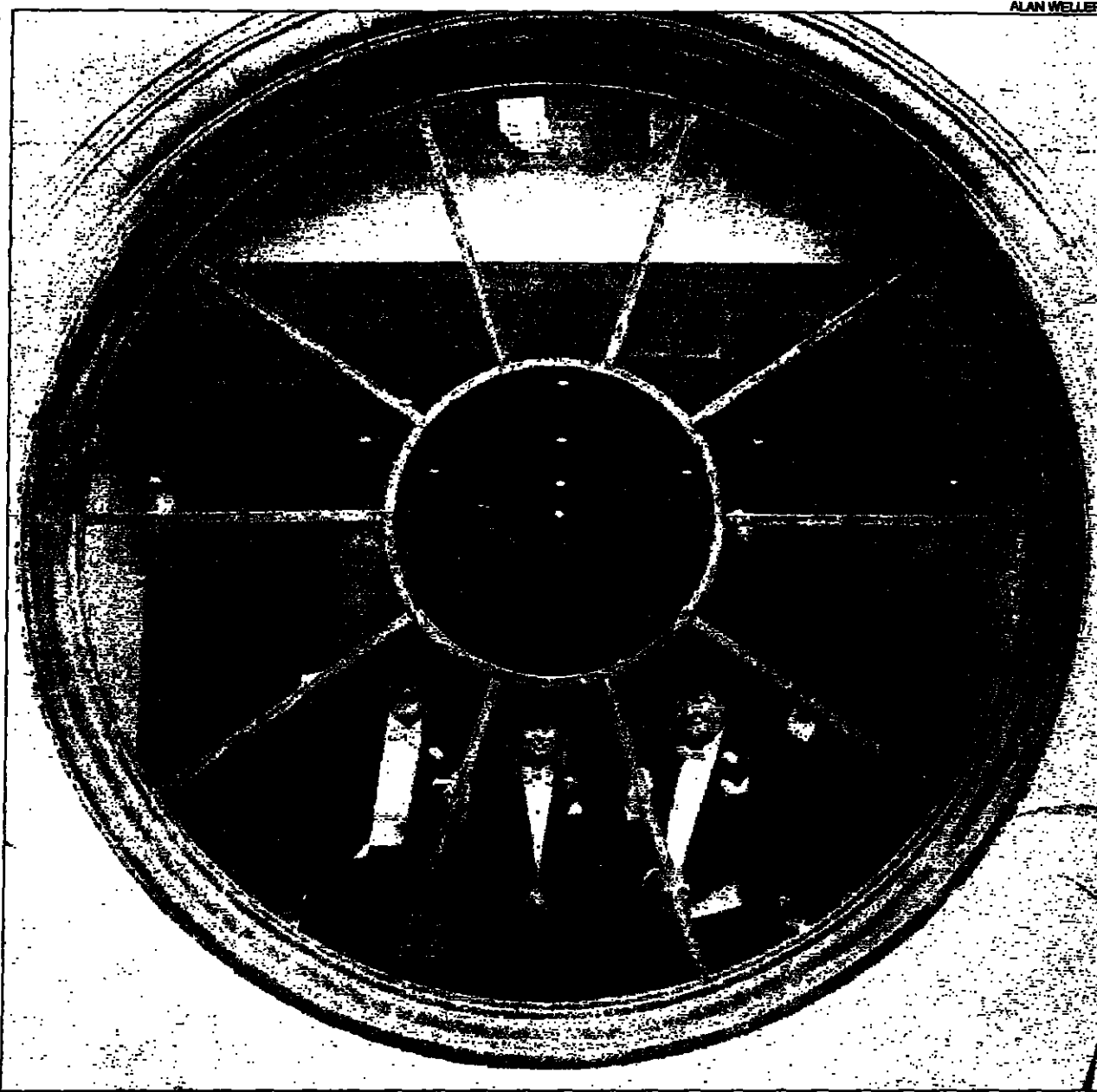
A further £2 billion of debt would be refinanced through a convertible bond that could ultimately give the banks two thirds or more of the equity. The negotiations are being led by the four agent banks — Banque Nationale de Paris (BNP), Credit Lyonnais, Midland, and National Westminster.

Most of the banks in the Eurotunnel syndicate are believed to have made provisions for up to two thirds of their exposure. National Westminster made a £70 million provision in its accounts last year and the other UK clearers are also thought to have taken heavy balance sheet hits over Eurotunnel.

A tiny fraction of the borrowings has been sold and traded in the "distressed debt" market, where it changes hands at around 33p in the pound.

Eurotunnel's vastly improved trading performance over the summer has helped the bargaining hand of Sir Alastair Morton, the co-chairman of Eurotunnel, who stands down when the refinancing has been completed. Sir Alastair announced last month that first-half losses had been cut, from £426 million to £371 million, and revenues more than doubled, to £224 million.

The company is expected to be further helped next year by a large rationalisation of the cross-Channel ferry operators aimed at halting the disastrous slide in ticket prices.



Chef Gerard's Neville Abraham, left, celebrates with Clare White, finance director, and Laurence Isaacson, deputy chairman

BUSINESS TODAY

FTSE 100	3853.7	(+7.3)
Yield	3.84%	
FTSE All share	1945.00	(+1.07)
Nikkei	21554.40	(+9.38)
New York	2501.40	(+28.45)
Dow Jones	888.35	(+3.18)
S&P Composite		

Federal Funds	5.75%	(5.75%)
Long Bond	5.75%	(5.75%)
Yield	5.50%	(5.50%)

3-mth Interbank	5.75%	(5.75%)
Life long	100%	(100%)
Future (Dec)		

New York	1.5658	(1.5658)
London	1.5634	(1.5634)
DM	2.2846	(2.2846)
FF	8.0891	(8.0891)
SF	1.2555	(1.2555)
Yen	111.63	(111.63)
S Index	57.4	(57.4)

London	1.5270	(1.5270)
DM	5.1623	(5.1623)
FF	1.2555	(1.2555)
SF	1.2555	(1.2555)
Yen	111.63	(111.63)
S Index	57.4	(57.4)

Tokyo close	Yen 111.45	
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Brent 15-day (Dec)	\$22.80	(\$22.80)
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London close	\$378.60	(\$381.15)
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House prices up 7% in past year says Nationwide

By ROBERT MILLER

NATIONWIDE house prices jumped nearly 7 per cent in the past year, according to the latest survey by Nationwide Building Society.

On a monthly basis, prices rose 1.4 per cent in September, compared with 1.7 per cent the previous month. The Halifax, Britain's largest mortgage lender, with more than two million borrowers, is expected to report that house prices are now 5 per cent higher than they were a year ago when the society publishes its own monthly index today.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the rise in property prices, which was sustained during the generally quiet summer months, is by no means countrywide. Homeowners in certain areas of the UK have seen little movement, and well over 500,000 borrowers are still caught in the negative equity trap, with loans larger than the value of their properties.

Philip Williamson, corporate development director at Nationwide, said: "The apparent strength of house prices in recent months continues to reflect distortions caused by shortages of quality properties in certain sectors of the market, which are giving a short-term boost to prices while severely limiting sales."

He added: "More significantly, property transactions have been on an upward trend so far this year, with

the most recent figure for August indicating activity is at least back to early 1995 levels. The strength of mortgage lending over the summer suggests this improvement will continue, and should gain momentum as existing owner-occupiers return to the market, alleviating localised supply constraints and resulting pressure on prices."

The average price of a house in September was £54,334 compared with £54,025 the previous month and £50,521 at the start of this year, according to Nationwide.

The exceptional rate of growth in house prices seen in recent months is unlikely to be sustained, however. Even Nationwide admits that while the future for the housing market looks more promising than for some time it would caution against overoptimism, saying "the current upturn has none of the characteristics usually associated with a damaging boom."

Adrian Coles, director-general of the Council of Mortgage Lenders, said recently that if the present housing market trends continued to the end of the year "net lending, the best measure of actual housing market activity, will still only be about as strong as in 1993 and weaker than in 1994, well after the housing market recession had started".

Chez Gerard serves up good news

A TENTH restaurant is on the menu at Groupe Chez Gerard, which yesterday unveiled a 23 per cent rise in full-year profits to £2.9 million (Alasdair Murray writes).

The restaurant company, which also owns Bertorelli's and Scotts in London, said it is aiming to open a new Chez Gerard branded restaurant early next year at Bishopsgate, in the City of London.

Neville Abraham, chairman and chief executive, said trading in the first quarter is running ahead of last year and he is positive about the prospects for the restaurant industry. Overall turnover rose 25 per cent to £16.4 million. The total dividend was lifted 17 per cent to 2.8p, with a 1.9p final due November 18.

Republic Industries and ADT scrap \$5bn merger

By ERIC REGULY

ADT, the electronic security and car auction group, and Republic Industries yesterday called off their \$5 billion merger because of recent share price volatility.

The collapse of the deal was welcomed by Western Resources of Kansas, which owns 24.3 per cent of ADT and had been preparing to mount a campaign to prevent the merger from proceeding.

Republic was to buy ADT in a share swap. But Republic shares have not stood still since the proposed merger was announced in early July. In mid-June, they peaked at more than \$34 a share, then fell to less than \$20 in August. Yesterday, bolstered by termination of the merger talks,

they rose almost \$2 to about \$29. Michael Ashcroft, chairman and chief executive of ADT, said: "The delay in completing the transaction forced both companies to put business expansion plans on hold. Both companies will now be free to resume their individual business plans."

ADT did not give details of its business plans. Republic said it would proceed with several acquisitions in the waste and automotive sector. The company intends to hold its warrant to acquire 15 million ordinary ADT shares at an exercise price of \$20 a share. The warrant is valid for six months.

GrandMet must pay £36m over Hill sale

By ALASDAIR MURRAY

BRENT WALKER, the leisure company, claimed a partial victory yesterday in its bitter six-year legal battle with Grand Metropolitan when an independent adjudicator awarded it compensation of £117.5 million.

GrandMet will actually pay only £36 million because Brent Walker withheld £50 million of the total payment, which with interest has now increased in value to £82 million.

The dispute centred on Brent Walker's £685 million acquisition of William Hill, the betting company, from GrandMet in 1989. Brent Walker claimed that GrandMet had overstated profits at its subsidiary and demanded a reduction of up to £250 million in the asking price.

Arthur Andersen, the accountancy firm that acted as an independent adjudicator, decided that GrandMet should pay back £117.5 million because the profits had been overstated. The adjudicator calculated that profits should have been stated at £45.8 million and not the £55 million employed at the time.

Brent Walker said yesterday it would continue to pursue some related claims for legal costs and interest on the award, backdated over six years, which were not covered by the decision. GrandMet has already taken a £20 million charge to cover the legal costs of the dispute.

Eager consumers keep up demand

By JANET BUSH, ECONOMICS CORRESPONDENT



The dollar shows its strength to brokers in Tokyo

THE consumer sectors of the economy continue their robust growth, with demand for mortgage finance and other types of credit remaining strong in August.

The latest figures further convinced the City that another cut in base rates should be ruled out and helped sterling to another 1996 high against the mark.

The pound jumped to DM2.3865 in early trading, surpassing the previous high for this year against the German currency of DM2.3840 hit on Friday. Sterling was also helped by a surge in the dollar to a two-and-a-half-year high against the yen.

Consumer credit jumped by £997 million, higher than economists had expected. Together with July's increase in credit of £1.05 billion — the second biggest on record — this confirmed that, if anything, consumer spending is accelerating. Compared with a year ago, consumer credit is now up by 15.5 per cent, the highest year-on-year gain since the first quarter of 1990.

Net mortgage loans rose by £1.7 billion in August after a £1.6 billion jump in July. Taking mortgages and other credit together, total personal borrowing rose by £2.7 billion and 0.6 per cent in the month. Michael Saunders, UK economist at Salomon Brothers, said that this is the biggest rise since 1991 and fits in with a picture of big gains in retail sales and house prices in August.

Separate figures published yesterday showed that M0 narrow money supply rose by 0.2 per cent in September, the lowest month-on-month gain since May. M0's annual rate fell to 7.0 per cent from 7.4 per cent.

Although this drop was exaggerated by a sharp fall in bankers' operational deposits, which are notoriously volatile, the latest figures suggest that retail spending may have cooled off a little in September.

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Troubled VHI seeks new chief

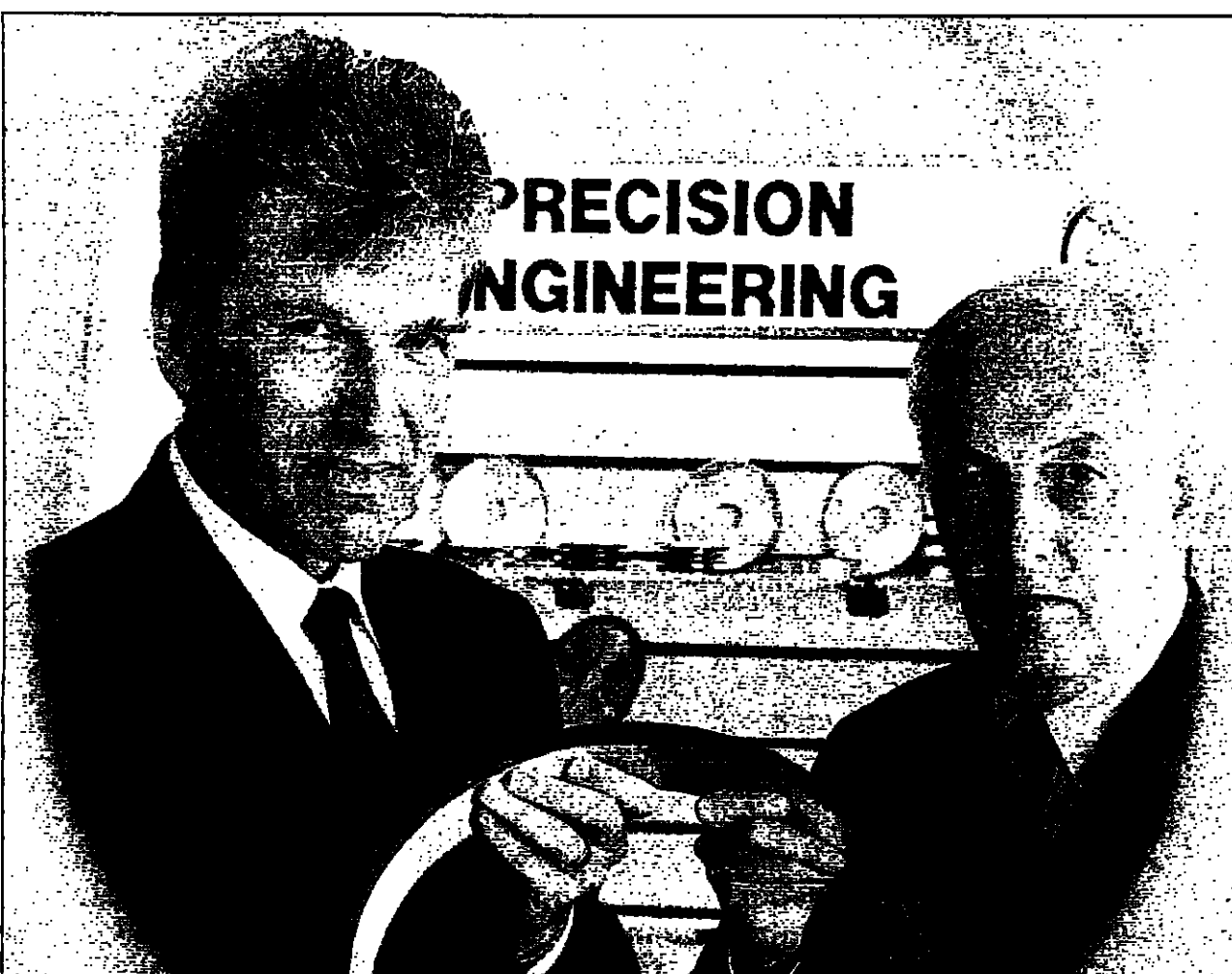
FROM EILEEN MCCABE
IN DUBLIN

THE board of Voluntary Health Insurance (VHI), the Republic of Ireland's troubled private health insurance group, met last night to discuss the appointment of a new chief executive, the third such meeting in less than three years.

VHI, which was set up by the Government in 1957, has come under intense scrutiny recently as a result of a public boardroom squabble over the performance of Brian Duncan, who resigned as chief executive last week. Mr Duncan's predecessor, Tim Ryan, also vacated the post in acrimonious circumstances just over two years ago.

The latest row erupted after a report from a VHI board sub-committee criticised Mr Duncan's management style and called for his contract to be terminated. Mr Duncan left the group after agreeing what is believed to be a very generous settlement package.

The company, which provides private health cover for 1.3 million people in the Republic, has been heavily criticised in recent weeks for increasing its premiums ahead of the rate of inflation. It responded by blaming escalating health costs. However, the main challenge facing the new chief executive — expected to be in place within the next few weeks — is likely to be how to respond to the planned entry into the Irish market by BUPA, the British private health insurance group.



Richard Hall, Unicorn's technical director, and David Rimmer, the chief executive, are facing stiffer competition

Unicorn flat at half time

BY FRASER NELSON

CONSOLIDATION in Britain's DIY sector held back profits at Unicorn, the abrasives manufacturer, which turned in flat results for the six months to June 30.

Rising raw material prices hit margins in its UK retail business, which the company said was further hampered by stiffening competition. Weak demand from France and Germany held back sales to continental Europe, which fell slightly to £17.6 million. Overall turnover rose 2.7 per cent to £53.2 million.

After strong results from North America and Sweden, group pre-tax profits were £3.55 million (£3.4 million), which took earnings from 6.8p to 7p per share.

Lindsay Bury, Unicorn's chairman, said that its European order book was tightening in some sectors, but said its operations in North America continued to perform strongly.

A maiden interim dividend of 2.05p is due on November 5.

BUSINESS ROUNDUP

Unit trust funds hit £128bn peak

A BUOYANT UK stock market in August helped to swell unit trust funds under management by nearly £5 billion to a record £128 billion, according to new figures published today. The Association of Unit Trusts and Investment Funds (Autif) says net sales of unit trusts were £665 million compared with £609 million in July. Net new retail investment by private investors, however, was £346.7 million, the lowest monthly figure so far this year — although the number of unitholder accounts increased to 7.7 million against 7.5 million in July.

Sales of unit trust personal equity plans (Peps) again helped to boost the overall Autof figures, with net sales of £307 million compared with £246 million a year ago and £379 million in July. Autof also confirmed that its performance category committee has asked data providers to delete Morgan Grenfell's European funds from any comparative performance data, including league tables, they supply.

Celsis buys Lumac

CELSIS INTERNATIONAL, the specialist in microbial testing, is buying Lumac, the Swedish testing company, for £11.22 million, the deal to be funded by an £11.1 million rights issue. The seller is Perstorp, which will take £10 million in cash and £1.22 million in shares. The three-for-20 rights issue is priced at 100p per share, against yesterday's closing price of 112p, down 1p. Arthur Holden, the chief executive, said the deal provided "an excellent opportunity". Celsis was floated in 1993 and has seen annual sales rise from £274,000 to £5 million.

DCS exceeds forecasts

SHARES of DCS Group rose 28p to an all-time high of 225½p yesterday after the business software company's profits almost quadrupled to £2.37 million. The results, sharply ahead of City forecasts, include a full-year contribution from CSI, bought for £8.2 million in June 1995. In the year to June 30, sales rose from £8.7 million to £30.4 million. The resignation of three directors in March cost £297,000, after which earnings were 8.31p per share (5.02p). Analysts were yesterday forecasting profits of £4.2 million for the year to December 31. A final dividend of 1p, due December 2, makes a year total of 1.5p (1p).

New Ducati ownership

DUCATI MOTORS, a newly formed joint venture between Claudio and Gianfranco Castiglioni and a group of investors led by Texas Pacific Group, has bought the assets of Ducati motorcycles from the Castiglioni brothers and Cagiva, their family company. Texas Pacific, based in San Francisco and Fort Worth, Texas, manages TPG Partners, a \$720 million private investment partnership that specialises in corporate acquisitions. Ducati employs 570 people. Sales of Ducati motorbikes grew annually by 25 per cent between 1990 and 1995, reaching about £127 million in 1995.

Third chair for Wallis

STUART WALLIS, the former chief executive of Fisons, the pharmaceuticals company, today becomes chairman of Yorkshire Group, the maker of dyes, tanning materials, pigments and inks. This is his third appointment since Fisons was bought by Rhône-Poulenc Rorer of France late last year. Mr Wallis is non-executive chairman of Scholl, the footwear and footwear group, and Sheffield Forgemasters, the steel company. Mr Wallis said: "This will be my last chairmanship for a while, but I would ultimately see myself having half a dozen of them."

Labour's plan for regulators puts utilities shares in the red

BY PHILIP BASSETT, INDUSTRIAL EDITOR

SHARES in utilities fell sharply yesterday after Labour said at its party conference in Blackpool that it would make protecting consumers' interests the top legal priority for industry regulators.

At present the utility regulators have to ensure that the utilities carry out and finance their job adequately, offering a reasonable rate of return on their capital.

The fundamental change in the regulators' role was announced for statutory regulators of the gas, water, electricity and telecommunications industries.

However, the utility regulators are likely to mount a sustained campaign against the reforms, arguing that the current regulatory regime remains the most appropriate means for controlling the utilities' prices and other policies.

Margaret Beckett, Labour's

Shadow Trade and Industry Secretary, announced the change during Labour's economic debate. She said Labour wanted to take a "fresh look" at the methods of the regulators "to stop the customer from being ripped off", as well as to ensure proper investment in the utilities

themselves. "A Labour government will change the law to ensure that the regulators of the utility industries have a primary duty to protect customers' interests, the interests of members of the public, along with their duties to promote competition and ensure financial viability."

What Labour plans to do would involve altering the legislation governing the regulators' operations. In the water industry, for example, the general duties of Ian Byatt, the director general of water services, are laid down in the Water Industry Act 1991, which makes clear that he has

to ensure the water companies can carry out and finance water and sewerage functions.

In particular, on finance the act makes clear that the regulator should ensure that companies secure a "reasonable" rate of return on their capital. Only after these duties have been secured has the director a further duty to customers, described by the regulatory body Ofwat as "secondary" and which specifically does not outweigh the regulator's primary duties on provision of services and financing. Other regulatory bodies have similar operating regimes.

While Labour would maintain the regulators' duties on funding and services, party leaders plan to boost the status of the regulatory provision on customers' interests to a primary duty.

Market report, page 30

R-R wins \$155m port deal

BY FRASER NELSON

ROLLS-ROYCE has won a \$155 million contract to run a port terminal in Argentina in a joint venture with Mersey Docks and Harbour.

Under a 12-year deal with Siderar, an Argentinian steel producer, the two will operate an import and export terminal handling iron ore, coal and

steel on the River Parana, 150 miles north of Buenos Aires. The contract marks both the first joint venture and first non-UK port deal for Clarke Chapman, Rolls-Royce's materials handling arm. While both companies will have a 50/50 share in the proceeds from the venture, Mersey

Docks will play a managerial role while Rolls-Royce will put up the new equipment.

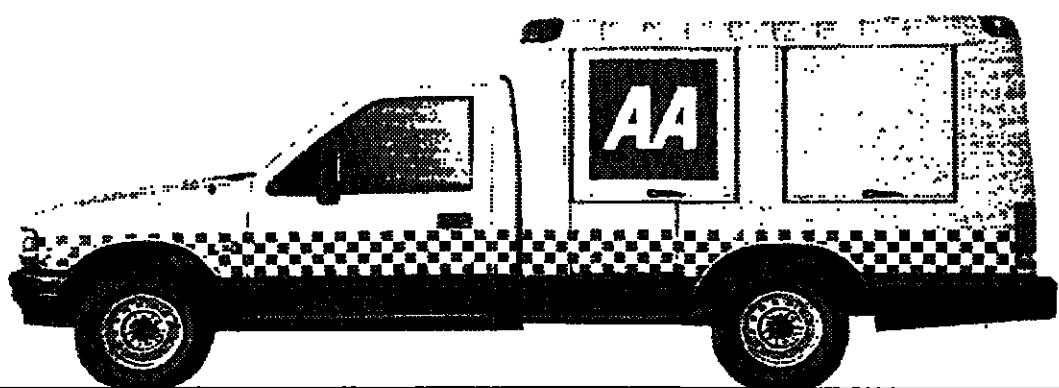
The venture is to run under the name of Clarke Chapman-Portia Port Services. Barry Morgan, Clarke Chapman's managing director, said that the deal was the largest port contract won by Rolls-Royce.

TOURIST RATES

	Bank Buys	Bank Sells
Australia \$	2.08	1.50
Austria Sch	17.75	16.25
Belgium Fr	51.98	47.98
Canada \$	2.235	2.075
Cyprus Cyp£	0.782	0.706
Denmark Kr	9.71	8.91
Finland Mk	1.69	1.54
France Fr	6.45	7.80
Germany Dm	2.53	2.32
Greece Dr	301	306
Hong Kong \$	12.71	11.71
Iceland	115	95
Ireland Pt	1.65	0.75
Israel Shk	5.40	4.75
Italy Lira	2487	2322
Japan Yen	187.90	171.90
Malta	0.655	0.550
Netherlands Gld	2.922	2.550
New Zealand \$	2.38	2.16
Norway Kr	10.70	9.90
Portugal Esc	253.50	233.50
Spain Ptas	7.65	6.95
Sweden Kr	208.50	193.50
Switzerland Fr	10.57	10.17
Turkey Lira	2.03	1.91
USA \$	1.45000	1.37000

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هكذا من الأصل

□ Hydro deal failure is bad news □ Restructuring looks inevitable at Eurotunnel □ Unblocking the company reporting jam

Knocked out by sleeping Gas

□ CUSTOMERS and shareholders of British Gas alike had better wrap up warm, because it is going to be an awful winter. The abandonment of talks with Scottish Hydro-Electric over the sale of gas supply in Scotland and the north looks like the harbinger of much worse weather to come.

It is always hard to get a handle on just how bad things are at British Gas because the company is, how can one put this tactfully, inclined to minimise its public utterances the extent of any problem. A useful rule of thumb is to multiply the admitted damage fivefold to tenfold.

Certainly, calls to this paper from Gas employees past and present since the computer chaos was first revealed on these pages suggest that the first week of severe frost is going to be very bad news for anyone who then needs their central heating fixed. Meanwhile, the software chaos that is sending red notices and threats of disconnections to the fiscally blameless is clearly deep-rooted and possible widespread. Time alone will tell.

The failure of the Scottish Hydro deal is seriously bad news for the company, because it was a way out of an area that makes unacceptably low profits. It also put a clear value on the British Gas Energy business being demerged, which Gas says the

City undervalues, and obtained some shareholder value for the inevitable loss of market share to full competition in 1998. Such a move might reasonably have been followed by the off-loading of other bits of the supply business. There would be no shortage of buyers — most of the electricity industry is queuing up to get into gas supply.

Now British Gas is stuck in a business that it is clearly not committed to ahead of full competition and the arrival of some very committed new players. Hydro is unlikely to be happy at the abrupt end of the talks. None of the reasons for the breakdown in negotiations make much sense. Gas was waffling yesterday about regulatory and commercial hurdles but unclear what these were. Clare Spottiswoode, the regulator, has apparently said that any sale to Hydro might require her to issue, horror of horrors, a consultative document. Given that the company is heading for a full Monopolies and Mergers Commission inquiry some time this week over charges for use of the pipeline business, TransCo,

this would seem to be only a minor outbreak of hostilities.

The simple fact is that British Gas, below the senior board members who are still focused on the necessary strategy, is paralysed, in no fit shape for that strategy to be carried out. It lacks the means and the management to carry out the necessary accounting and due diligence needed before any deal could take place. Consider this: in the light of the billing shambles, how can you put a fair value on the business when you have no way of knowing just how much, at any given time, your customers owe you?

Heading out of the tunnel at last

□ THERE is an awful inevitability about the passing of yet another deadline for Eurotunnel's rescheduling of its £9 billion of debt. Nothing yet on the Channel Tunnel has run to time, from building to starting up the various services; why should its financial death throes not be equally protracted?



There is an equal inevitability about the settlement that will eventually be reached, and the loss by ordinary shareholders of half or more of their voting power. What is being searched for is some way of ensuring, in headline terms alone, that those shareholders appear to come out on top while giving the banks, the true owners, what they want. The squaring of this particular circle has been achieved. The co-chairmen, Sir Alastair Morton and Patrick Ponsolle, will emerge with a slip of paper "proving" that shareholders have hung on to 51 per cent of the shares and are therefore nominally in control. A convertible share issue to the banks, meanwhile, in return for forgiveness of

some more of the debt would put them potentially in control. Result: saving of both face and company. What is being argued about now is the price at which those shares will convert, and the date. Too rapid or too cheap a conversion could bring further trouble from shareholders.

There are any number of compelling reasons why both sides, after a few more days/weeks/months of talks just to prolong the agony, will eventually settle. The tunnel is, operationally, a surefire success, with 45 per cent of the cross-Channel market and revenues that doubled this summer. But the ferry operators are marshalling for a counter-attack, and management effort should be concentrated on this. There is, simply, no upside in the talks collapsing.

The downside is horrendous, the ultimate lawyers' paradise. French shareholders suing French banks, French banks suing British banks, this small shareholder group suing that... it would be a straight run of Lloyd's of London, a nightmare that arose out of combined losses

that were actually less than Eurotunnel's debt and one that the various protagonists are only just awaking from.

Preposterous preliminaries

□ ANALYSTS may be grossly overpaid, and nine out of ten no use to anyone, but they do suffer for their art. A survey by KPMG of companies' preliminary results came across one announcement 77 pages long. Add a presentation by a nit-picking chief executive taking in every single fact, every blessed brand, every market worldwide, and then the question-and-answer session that can easily clock up another hour. Small wonder so much brokers' research fails to see the wood for the trees.

Now KPMG suggests, quite seriously, that this plethora of "preliminary" information so resembles the full accounts that appear a few weeks later that the two might as well be rolled into one. There is little in those accounts except the inevitable

press reports of "fat-cat" pay packages, says KPMG, and this is "tangential to the main purpose of financial reporting". Perhaps, but it would be a shame to lose them.

Fair point, even if it fails to address the main problem with company reporting, the bunching of thousands of important trading statements into a reporting season lasting just two or three weeks. Inevitably if most companies must insist on a December financial year end, this does leave analysts and shareholders, both private and institutional, badly served.

Pricked balloon

□ PENICILLIN, the compass, the internal combustion engine... they all paled into insignificance after the AIM debut in January of "the world's first process to convert ordinary latex balloons into balloons that can be sealed without tying a knot". This is not to be read as an investment recommendation. Self Sealing Systems has yet to make a cent, the share price has sadly detoured since and yesterday the company decided to license the process rather than go it alone. But for the inventor of the "eversion technique" and the even more sublime "surface refreshing technique", a Nobel Prize, surely?

Britannic to back Refuge merger plan

By MARIANNE CURPHY

THE proposed merger between Refuge Assurance and United Friendly looked increasingly likely yesterday after two of Refuge's major investors, who hold 16 per cent of shares, decided to back the deal.

Britannic, which has a 10 per cent stake in Refuge, announced it would vote through the proposals. Prudential, with 6 per cent, is believed to have reached the same decision after Refuge published details of an improved offer yesterday. Britannic had initially expressed reservations about the deal and was among a number of major shareholders, including Prudential and Perpetual, who felt that Refuge shareholders were being short-changed because the deal failed to take into account Refuge's estimated £450 million of orphan assets.

However, Refuge bowed to shareholder pressure and set out the details of an improved offer, designed as a sweetener to quell opposition. Phoenix Securities, Refuge's

adviser, has invented a new security, which will be transferable but not listed on the stock market. It will entitle Refuge shareholders to receive any extra value in Refuge's ordinary branch fund should orphan assets be identified.

John Cudworth, Refuge's chief executive, said he did not believe there were any more orphan assets to which shareholders are entitled. Perpetual said it was "discouraged by some omissions" but added it was still considering the revised offer.

Under the improved offer, which will be formally proposed at an extraordinary meeting on October 16, Refuge shareholders will receive three new securities for every one Refuge share held.

The new security will be in the form of convertible deferred shares of 1p each. They would be able to be traded separately and any additional value would be represented by conversion of the security into new ordinary shares of the merged Refuge and United Friendly.

Guardian group falls

By ERIC REGULY

GUARDIAN Media Group, owner of The Guardian and Observer newspapers, yesterday reported a 26 per cent fall in pre-tax profits to £20.1 million in the year to March 31 on turnover of £301.8 million, up 5 per cent.

Profits were hit by £4.7 million redundancy charges and a £10.3 increase in newspaper costs. GMG, owned by

the Scott Trust, a charitable body, did not disclose results of the various divisions, but Observer losses are thought to be running at about £500,000 a month, down from as much as £1 million a month last year. DMG said prospects "look better" because newspaper prices are easing, while circulation of many of its regional papers is on the rise.

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Brown's threat of windfall tax shakes the utilities

THE privatised utilities suffered sharp falls with the renewed threat of an incoming Labour government imposing a windfall tax.

Gordon Brown, the Shadow Chancellor, has suggested to the party faithful at Blackpool that one of his first moves would be to impose a windfall tax on the cash-rich former nationalised industries.

The electricity companies were particularly hard hit with losses recorded in PowerGen 10p to 48p, London 14p to 61p, Northern 15p to 51p, Southern 23p to 61p, and Yorkshire 11p to 74p.

Brokers say the water companies are better placed to cope with the imposition of a windfall tax after their diversification. Even so, the big players were still marked lower. Severn Trent lost 15p to 59p, Thames 13p to 53p, United Utilities 15p to 57p, Wessex 8p to 35p, and Yorkshire 11p to 74p.

Elsewhere, genuine investment demand slowed to a trickle as fund managers balanced the books ahead of the final quarter. Prices recovered an early setback with the help of the latest money supply and consumer credit numbers. A positive start on Wall Street enabled the FT-SE 100 index to close near its best of the day with a rise of 7.3 to 3,953.7.

Hanson firm 14p to 150p, closing just 4p above its low for the year. Later today shares in the group's Millennium Chemicals and Imperial Tobacco arms start trading independently as the proposed four-way merger gets under way.

Shares of Millennium opened in New York, where they were trading last week on the grey market at \$26 a piece, equivalent to 34p of the original Hanson share price. Imperial Tobacco is expected to start at 38p, or 38p pre-merger.

Grand Metropolitan firmed 14p to 47p ahead of a presentation for brokers last night. Trading in shares of Eurotunnel were suspended in London at 11.30p at the company's request with the warrants frozen at 45p. The company has been trying to renegotiate with a consortium of 200-plus banks over its debts.

Renewed worries about a soft drinks price war left Cadbury Schweppes nursing



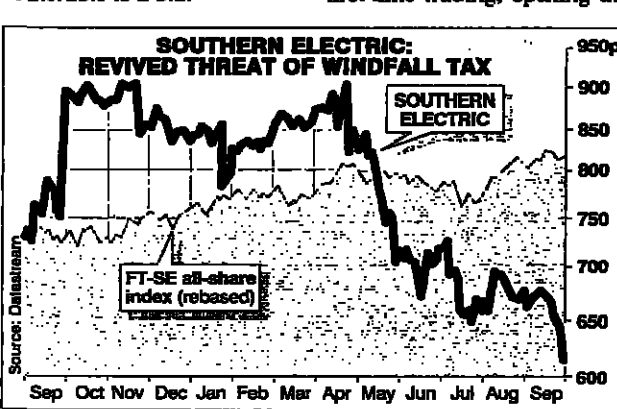
Frankie Dettori's seven wins knocked 7p off Stanley Leisure

a 6p fall to 513p. PepsiCo's \$25 million restructuring charge on Thursday had dealers suggesting that Pepsi may cut the price of its non-cola soft drinks.

Jockey Frankie Dettori's record-breaking seven wins at Ascot on Saturday has cost the bookies dearly. Stanley Leisure fell 7p to 235p after admitting that the feat is likely

to cost it £2.25 million and will impact on half-year figures later this month. Two of its punters landed returns in excess of £200,000 and a third picked up more than £100,000.

Matthew Clark, the troubled cider group, clawed back some of its recent losses with a rise of 19p to 337p amid talk that the group's weakened share price could leave it vulnerable to a bid.



FT-SE all-share index (rebased)

167p compared with the original placing price of 150p. The Personal Number Company was ringing up all the right numbers for investors after making its debut on the Alternative Investment Market. Placed at 66p, the shares opened at 70p, touched 106p and settled at 101p, a premium of 35p.

One of last week's high fliers, Verity, continued to make headway with the share 5p dearer at 28p as investors began pinning their hopes on a new sound system developed by the group. By the close a total of 40 million Verity shares had traded.

Aminex rose 3p to 58p after the International Finance Corporation picked up 6.9 million shares, or 15 per cent of the company at 57p. IFC has also agreed to bankroll Aminex £17 million to develop oilfields in Russia and Tunisia.

One of the best moves on the day was seen in Self Sealant Systems, up 18p to 39p, after announcing it had placed its first machine under licence with the country's largest ball joint maker. The company joined AIM earlier this year at 54p.

A useful profits increase last year at Northern Leisure was rewarded with a rise of 19p to 157p, but a doubling of profits last year at Oasis Stores failed to make much impact. The price finished 13p lower at 392p.

GILT-EDGED: Prices rallied after a slow start but saw those gains pared by the latest September Chicago Purchasing Managers' Index.

In the futures pit, the December series of the long gilt traded in limits of £108 and £108.12, before closing a tick higher at £108.12. Turnover reached 38,000 contracts, well below recent levels.

Existing stock of 2001 and 2003 will be auctioned October 22, existing stock within the range of 2014 to 2016 on October 24, and new short gilts due 2001 to 2003 in December.

In longs, Treasury 8 per cent 2015 was unchanged at £100.12, while in shorts Treasury 8 per cent 2000 closed 1/4 up at £103.3.

NEW YORK: Shares on Wall Street were higher as investors took heart from good economic news. By midday the Dow Jones industrial average was 28.48 points higher at 5,901.40.

MAJOR INDICES

New York (midday):	
Dow Jones	5901.40 (+28.48)
S&P Composite	689.35 (+3.16)
Tokyo:	
Nikkei Average	21566.40 (+4.38)
Hong Kong:	
Hang Seng	11902.43 (+143.04)
Amsterdam:	
EOE Index	576.96 (+5.04)
AO	2290.4 (+7.4)
Sydney:	
DAX	2651.85 (+7.19)
Singapore:	
Strait Times	2177.16 (+6.11)
Brussels:	
General	9764.94 (-22.50)
Paris:	
CAC-40	21328.81 (+25.76)
Zurich:	
SEA Gen	781.70 (+6.39)

London:	
FT 30	2834.8 (+12.4)
FT 100	3953.7 (+7.3)
FTSE Mid 250	4391.1 (+15.1)
FTSE 350	1369.8 (+1.4)
FTSE Eurotrack 100	1724.85 (+1.42)
FT All-Share	1945.00 (+1.07)
FT Non-Financials	2045.98 (+0.58)
FT Financials	1131.1 (+0.20)
FT Govt Sec	937.5 (+0.19)
Bargains	4424
SEAQ Volume	695,000
US (Dollars)	159.86 (+0.18)
US\$	1.5649 (+0.0007)
German Mark	2.3854 (+0.0021)
Exchange Index	87.0 (+0.1)
Bank of England official rate (per cent)	5.5
ESCU	1.2438
ESDR	1.0825
RPI	153.1 Aug (2.1%) Jan 1997-100
RPI-X	152.8 Aug (2.8%) Jan 1997-100

RECENT ISSUES

AEA Technology	319	-4
Amer Oppe U L	95	-
Barbican Health	62	-
Brunner Mond	168	-14
Cruden Bay	85	-4
Dunfermline	187	-1
Deirton Electrol (150)	167	-
Dentmaster Hedges	4	-
Elect Retail Sys	214	-3
Paywot	45	-
GT Chile Gth Fund	25	-
Grosvenor Land	15	-
Harrogate Star Assn C	93	-
Harstone 8% Cum	123	-1
Life Numbers	5	-
Life Numbers Wts	5	-
Personal Number	101	-
Polycide	70	-
Schroder Emg Cou Wts	93	-
Shallbank	137	-
Weeks Group	7	-

RIGHTS ISSUES

BICC n/p (270)	20	-1
Davis Fin Uts n/p	37	-1
FTI Group n/p (105)	3	-
Gramplan n/p (125)	4	-1

MAJOR CHANGES

DCS Co	225	+128p
Matthew Clark	337	+119p
LucasVarly	254	+13p
Kenwood App	218	+11p
Business Post	480	+22p
Lib Spc	231	+18p
Lib Spc	231	+18p
Boomerang Int	317	+11p
Chrysalis	517	+15p
Smiths Inds	792	+15p

FALLS:	
Falcom Corp	181p (-18p)
Acorn Comp	200p (-15p)
Cohen (A)	525p (-20p)
Capital Radio	599p (-22p)
Paion	425p (-18p)
Anglian	537p (-15p)

Closing Prices Page 33

TEMPUS

Flexing Auntie's muscles

FLEXTECH and its American half-owner, Telecommunications Inc. are at the forefront of a revolution at the BBC. The cable and satellite TV programmer has signed a deal that will transform the 74-year-old BBC from an institution funded by licence fees to one increasingly supported by commercial income. To do so, it will launch a dozen or so BBC-branded pay-TV channels on both sides of the Atlantic.

For the BBC it means global exposure at no expense. Its currency is programming, which it will provide in exchange for equity stakes in the subscription channels and a share of their profits. What, then, is left for the diminutive Flextech? It must invest almost £160 million, equivalent to one quarter of its market capitalisation, to find and develop markets for new channels in a TV-saturated world.

Refuge Group HOW galling it must be for Refuge to spend large sums creating a new security which it believes is worthless. Yet, the life insurer is prepared to pay the price to see through its merger with United Friendly.

Refuge has created this sweetener in the face of a revolt from its largest shareholders after merger terms were announced. The institutions believe the insurer has up to £450 million in surplus assets which might become available for distribution in the future but which are not included in shareholder's funds. The rebels feared dilution of their claim on the assets when the owners of United Friendly become part of the enlarged group.

A bespoke security with a six-year life span will guarantee the original Refuge

shareholders their share of the alleged booty. However, the Department of Trade and Industry has already looked at Refuge's ordinary branch funds and failed to find any money over which the shareholders could lay claim. For the new security to have intrinsic value that decision would need to be changed or challenged, per-

haps in court. Nevertheless, the scepticism of the DTI and the Refuge board is not shared by several big funds.

At least one speculator is circling, keen to buy the entire Refuge issue. If there is one gambler out there, it is unlikely to be alone and investors could yet see some competition for their worthless shares.

In the longer term, however, the outlook is more encouraging. Within ten years, more than ten million homes will have access to the "multichannel" market, and Flextech's new channels will have an edge because of their BBC content. It is no accident that UK Gold is one of the few profitable pay-TV channels - its content is drawn from the BBC's archives.

ment income. Holdings of short-term assets increased by £4.3 billion in the three months to June. Maturing pension liabilities in part explains the need for liquidity but the unavoidable conclusion is that some fund managers have been hoarding cash in the conviction that interest rate rise was just round the corner. Meanwhile, companies that raised their own liquidity in a feverish bout of destocking in winter are moving into a reinvestment phase. Were that to be characterised by a winter round of rights issues, the institutions will be well-placed to help out the corporate sector. However, their decision to hoard cash this spring will mean poor performance figures for some fund managers.

Having sat on the fence for three months, fund managers started to buy shares in the second quarter, investing a net £2.3 billion but it was not enough to avoid a further build-up of cash from invest-

ment income. Holdings of short-term assets increased by £4.3 billion in the three months to June. Maturing pension liabilities in part explains the need for liquidity but the unavoidable conclusion is that some fund managers have been hoarding cash in the conviction that interest rate rise was just round the corner. Meanwhile, companies that raised their own liquidity in a feverish bout of destocking in winter are moving into a reinvestment phase. Were that to be characterised by a winter round of rights issues, the institutions will be well-placed to help out the corporate sector. However, their decision to hoard cash this spring will mean poor performance figures for some fund managers.

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STANLEY LEISURE

Stanley Leisure

STANLEY Leisure, the gambling company, seems to be suffering a run of bad luck, a state of affairs normally expe-

rienced by its more profligate customers. Profits last year were hit hard by the arrival of the lottery, and the ensuing scratch-cards. Weekend results from Ascot forced the company to issue a profits warning. Frankie Dettori's record seven winning rides last weekend cost Stanley around £2.25 million, with two punters each scooping more than £300,000.

The warning prompted an inevitable decline in the company's share price as analysts' downgraded forecasts. But the £2.25 million could ultimately prove to be money well spent. As the Lottery begins to lose its novelty what better advertisement for the attractions of the neighbourhood bookie? Betting shops have suffered recently not just from lottery competition but from too much predictability in the results. For Stanley, a bad day at the races could be worth untold millions in free publicity.

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THE TIMES CITY DIARY

Hollywood endorsement

GOOD news for Sir Richard Greenbury, chairman and chief executive of Marks & Spencer. Joan Collins, famous for her Dynasty-size shoulder pads and power suits, boasts in the latest issue of *Good Housekeeping* that she buys some of her best outfits in the high street store. Collins said: "Yesterday I wore a little M&S T-shirt and friends said: 'So chic, darling!' If it's beautifully cut, why should I care about the chainstore label?"

WHO will be left at Brunswick after yet another minion flies to the political force? The latest to leave the PR firm is 25-year-old Andrew Honnor, an Exeter University graduate who has been appointed special adviser to Virginia Bottomley, the National Heritage Secretary. Not bad, Andrew — look what happened to John Birt. Conservative candidate for Buckingham, and Robert Creighton, chief executive of the Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children.



Bottomley: recruiting

Local difficulty

A ROW has broken out between commodity traders and Liffe, the newly merged futures and commodities exchange in London. Some 30 traders, known as "locals", have made claims that Liffe and the former London Commodities Exchange owe them up to £10,000 each. Alan Gloyne, a local on the coffee floor, said: "The treatment we have received has been grossly unfair. They simply sidelined us. The LCE should have had its house in order before it merged with Liffe."

Business model

WENCHE Marshall Foster, who stands down as chairman and chief executive of Perrier Vitell in December, was once the face of Royal courtier Norman Hartnell. In England to learn the language, Marshall Foster ended up on the catwalk in Hartnell's west London salon. Still in her early 20s she gave it up, before it gave her up, to join a sales promotion company. Perrier was one of her clients.

Air guitarist

AT AN impromptu performance in Yorkshire, Harvey Goldsmith and Ed Simons, chairman and chief executive of Allied Entertainment, proved their worth at the weekend. To announce their decision to join Superdome UK as non-executive directors, they flew in by helicopter for the photo-call at the 100-acre site that is being turned into the world's biggest sporting and entertainment facility under one roof. On landing, a photographer thrust a guitar into Goldsmith's hands. It was right-handed, Goldsmith is left-handed, and the concert promoter can't play a note.

Confusion at Financial Television yesterday, where the switchboard was alive with callers. They wanted to know why Thursday's headlines were appearing on their screens? Was it the symptom of a good weekend? No, a technical switching problem.

MORAG PRESTON



Children in every state school will be able to use online computers under BT's controversial deal with the Labour Party if it wins the next election

How business and Labour are staying on the line

A year after Blair announced the BT deal, Philip Bassett assesses developments

When Tony Blair, the Labour Party leader, today gives his keynote address to Labour's annual conference, business leaders will be watching closely for anything like his announcement a year ago today of a new deal between Labour and BT.

Mr Blair's BT announcement provoked a storm of controversy. He said a future Labour government would introduce a different regulatory regime for BT over broadband communications, while in return BT would link up for free all the public institutions, including schools, hospitals and libraries, which its cable-laying programme took it past.

Politically, for the Conservatives, the message was brutally clear. Here was one of Britain's biggest and most successful companies, and one in particular which had benefited hugely from the Conservatives' privatisation programme, in effect setting out its view that Labour, rather than the Conservatives, would win the next election.

Faced with such unequivocal nailing of colours to the mast, the Conservatives launched a ferocious and sustained counterattack, led by Ian Lang, President of the Board of Trade, but undermined when the deal was backed by a former Conservative Party chairman, Lord Tebbit, in his role as a BT director. The Government said Labour's move

was fundamentally anti-competitive — Labour trying to set up in advance a tight little cartel that would be of no benefit to business, with ministers emphasising that such an approach showed how little even Mr Blair's new Labour understood the real operation of the commercial marketplace. But Sir Iain Vallance, now BT's chairman, remained undeterred. Photographed carefully with Mr Blair in his hotel suite, BT's boss and BT generally stood its ground, insisting that the deal was good for its business, and good for Britain.

Now, a year on, where does Labour's controversial BT deal stand? The most significant point about it, both BT and Labour leaders believe, is precisely that the deal is unaltered by the attacks it received: a clear agreement that, in line with the recommendations of the Commons Trade and Industry Select Committee, BT will be given what it sees as the same access as some of its competitors to new information and entertainment networks. Geoff Hoon, Labour's information technology spokesman, and the frontbencher designated by the party leadership to be the principal conduit

for business and Labour, acknowledges that Labour was surprised about how much of an impact the BT deal had. However, he says its public-private mix, with the State as an enabler of successful business, is a model of government activity which business appreciates.

What Labour has done since the deal was announced, apart from maintaining contacts with BT, is to reassure the cable companies that they would not be either excluded from or disadvantaged in the information superhighways of the future under a Labour government.

"We very much acknowledge the cable companies' contribution," says Mr Hoon, who yesterday in Blackpool addressed a fringe meeting on new technologies. "They have wired up schools and other institutions as they pass them too." He emphasises that what Labour is doing in its BT deal is making sure that the market is fully open, rather than seeing a leading player such as BT excluded.

For its part, BT remains satisfied with the arrangement. Senior managers have done little over the past year to take it forward, resting instead on the know-

ledge that an arrangement is in place which will, if Labour is elected, give the company what it regards as vital market access rather more quickly than the Conservative Government intended.

Business will be looking today not necessarily for another BT-style business rabbit to be pulled from the leader's speech hat by Tony Blair, but will be listening to him attentively to see how close to business — and even further away from the trade unions — he will seek to shift the party.

That business and Labour are now closer than probably at any time in the party's history is clear. The Confederation of British Industry yesterday staged its first-ever fringe meeting at the Labour Party conference, although Adair Turner, the CBI Director-General, was quick to point out that the CBI will follow it with a similar meeting at the Conservatives' conference in Bournemouth next week.

The Institute of Directors has a stand at Labour's conference this week, and officials from all the main business bodies were in Blackpool yesterday to hear Labour's views on the economy.

Business may still be doing no more than buying insurance in the event of a Labour victory at the general election; but if BT's deal with Labour is anything to go by, it may be a purchase well worth business making.

Oliver August on the battle to stamp out the world's 'third-largest industry'

According to the myth, the term money laundering derives from Al Capone's practice of using a string of coin-operated laundrettes in Chicago to disguise his revenue from gambling, prostitution, racketeering and violation of the Prohibition laws.

It's a nice story, but not true. Money laundering is so called because it perfectly describes the process of removing the stains and smells which the money acquires when the gangsters earn it.

In his book *The Laundrymen*, Jeffrey Robinson said: "The source of illegally obtained funds is obscured through a succession of transfers and deals in order that those same funds can eventually be made to reappear as legitimate income."

Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor, has now thrown his weight behind the fight against such practices and is trying to stamp out this "third-largest industry worldwide". Already in party conference mood, he said: "Money launderers are criminals. They must be stopped in their tracks, caught and punished."

He told Commonwealth finance ministers at their meeting in Bermuda last Thursday that money laundering poses a serious threat to the economic health of their nations. "It is a concern that can only be addressed on a fully international basis," he said.

"Professional criminals seeking a safe harbour for their criminal proceeds will always locate the weakest links



Coining it: Al Capone, left, and his cronies used launderettes to legitimise dirty money

Governments gunning for money launderers

in the anti-money laundering chain. So countries which have not yet put the necessary protective measures in place will find themselves attracting the wrong sort of business, not only from fraudsters and crooks, but also from criminals that properly regulated centres have turned away."

The Treasury sent Mr Clarke to Bermuda with more than just a speech. He unpacked in front of his colleagues what the Treasury

calls an "anti-money laundering tool kit". This was a list of measures which the Treasury found useful and, so it claims, won the war against the money scrubbers in Britain.

Understandably, the list is not made public. The money launderers are thought to be sophisticated enough to follow the Chancellor's pronouncements. All that he would say is that the tool kit would provide "guidance on how to introduce and implement effective anti-

money laundering legislation and systems".

But by looking at the factors which led to the recent growth in the laundriesmen's activity, the nature of the measures is obvious. Lax regulation and supervision attracts dirty money like nothing else. Young stock markets in developing countries are easy prey for criminals versed in the art of accountancy.

The existence of tax havens also influences the flow of

money. As long as criminals can hide their profits in secret off-shore accounts, they will have the breathing space to find new holes in the legislative fabric put up to stop them. This is where Britain will find it harder to lecture the rest of the world. A former legal adviser to M15 and M16 recently called on the Government to abolish banking secrecy in its dependent territories. David Bickford said: "There appears to be no justification at all for off-shore bank secrecy other than to protect criminals."

Many developing countries turn a blind eye to money laundering, or postpone change, because they believe the funds will generate prosperity. However, a new IMF working paper argues that driving out the dirty money would actually increase prosperity. Vito Tanzi, the author, says that the presence of this money in the system diminishes economic efficiency. Scarce resources are not allocated according to fundamentals but in response to cash flows determined by criminals who make investment decisions for wholly different reasons.

Al Capone may decide to invest in laundromats, not because they will yield a good return, but because they clean up his dirty proceeds. The ensuing laundry boom, which must crash when Capone goes to jail, will draw away resources from, say, ice cream parlours or book shops. If the good burghers of Chicago had known, they would have had another reason to fear Capone.



ANATOLE KALETSKY

Labour needs to get real

Alas, poor Gordon. Flying to the Labour Party conference in Blackpool straight from the annual meeting of the International Monetary Fund in Washington put Gordon Brown's last big speech to the party faithful as Shadow Chancellor in an interesting perspective. Mr Brown's long speech covered every area of policy — education, training, environment, industrial policy, health and social security — apart from the ones he will actually have to deal with when he graduates to the real job.

The proper finance ministers in Washington may pay lip service to the "supply side" but they devote all their real energies to the standard macroeconomic issues: currencies, budget deficits and interest rates.

Mr Brown's desire to dodge such issues is understandable: why give hostages to fortune? The trouble is that he seems genuinely to believe that most of his time as Chancellor will be spent on supply-side nostrums. As a result Labour is totally unprepared for a huge economic challenge that could face it in office — a challenge which the delegates at Blackpool, from Mr Brown downwards, do not even have the mental equipment to imagine.

Almost everyone in Blackpool believes that a new Labour government will face a run on sterling and may have to respond with a sharp increase in interest rates. What they cannot even begin to imagine is a run on the currency caused by speculators scrambling to buy pounds.

Ridiculous? Not to judge by the only question I was asked in Washington about Britain: "Does Labour have any plans to prevent a surge in sterling after the election?" The question came from one of the shrewdest economic observers I know, who works for a big American hedge fund. It did not surprise me at all, but Labour has only one answer: "We should be so lucky". Yet, after the election, all the classic conditions for a surge in sterling will be in place: a strong domestic economy, rising consumer confidence, a stable government, low inflation and interest rates much higher

than in the rest of Europe. Now add in Mr Brown's eagerness to demonstrate his anti-inflationary virility by raising interest rates immediately after the election and we have all the components for a speculative vicious circle.

If the rise in interest rates sucked in foreign money it would be hailed as a vote of confidence in "new" Britain. Thus the stronger currency would boost domestic confidence as well as real incomes and consumption (as in the mid-1980s). Mr Brown, determined not to repeat what he sees (incorrectly) to be the mistakes of the 1980s by allowing a consumer boom, would respond by hiking interest rates again — pulling in more foreign money and giving the vicious circle another spin.

Now for the real nightmare. Suppose a Labour government also declared itself for monetary union. The speculators would then see the proverbial one-way street. The post-election currency surge in 1979, 1987 and (briefly) 1992 were followed by a widening trade deficit and eventual currency collapse. But if Britain joined EMU in 1999, or shortly after, speculators would be spared even that danger. With Britain offering higher interest rates than Germany and France, while the prospect of EMU eliminates the currency risk, there would be no limit on how far the pound could rise.

In principle, Mr Brown could avoid such a disaster. He could refrain from raising interest rates after the election, even if consumption was worryingly strong. Instead he could show he was serious about inflation by tightening fiscal policy. So the answer to the hedge fund operator's question is obvious: Mr Brown could avoid a sharp rise in sterling. He could raise taxes and cut public spending straight after the election. He could rule out membership of EMU. And, if necessary, he could cut interest rates against the Bank of England's advice in the midst of a consumer boom. And the skies above Downing Street could be filled with flying pigs.

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THE THOROUGHbred BANK
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Go straight to top for better service

From Mr Geoff Wilson
Sir, I strongly disagree with Mr Roger Wood's letter ("British Gas defends the quality of a phone service under pressure", September 26).

My wife and I have been trying to contact the British Gas Service Centre (01784 451411) over the past three weeks. Of the numerous calls made, only two have been answered by the customer service agent (CSA). In spite of the CSA's promise to get an engineer to our home (on two separate occasions), no one called! Even a letter to British Gas from my wife dated

September 12 remains unanswered.

I sympathise with Richard Fortin's letter ("All lines of communication exhausted", September 26): what do I do next? I faxed Mr John Evans, customer relations manager on 01784 899050. Mrs King telephoned me within an hour and booked an appointment for an engineer to call at our home today: a choice of morning or afternoon. Mrs King? Is she related to the King who did wonders for BA's service image. Yours faithfully, GEOFF WILSON, 143 Elborough Street, SW8.

I don't seem to be able to get through to British Gas

From Mr John Stevenson

Sir, Well done, Pennington (Under Pressure Again). Yesterday I telephoned British Gas more than 30 times over a period of three hours. I only wish I had only had to make "two or three phone calls" to

get through. I gave up trying and called the Gas Consumers Council, to be greeted by a recorded message that they were (under such pressure?) unable to answer telephone calls but would read any letters.

Quis custodiet? I prefer to

look to The Times. I am contacting one of the local independents.

Yours faithfully, JOHN STEVENSON, 1, Hales Meadow, Harpenden, Hertfordshire.

How is it known that the majority of phone calls are answered?

From Mr Christopher Power
Sir, It is good to hear from the managing director of British Gas ("British Gas defends the quality of a phone service under pres-

sure", September 26) that its telephone system has not collapsed and particularly that "the majority of customer calls are being answered". As a matter of interest, how

does he know? Yours faithfully, CHRISTOPHER POWER, Swanmore Lodge, Upper Swanmore, Southampton, Hants.

Spain gets record austerity budget

FROM TUNKU
VARADARAJAN
IN MADRID

THE most austere budget in Spain's history was presented before parliament yesterday by Rodrigo Rato, the Minister for the Economy.

The budget, described by aides as reflecting a "Maastricht or bust" philosophy, is the first presented by the new conservative Government of José María Aznar.

The objective of the budget is to enable Spain to be in the European Monetary Union (EMU) from its projected inception in January 1999. To that end, the Government has sought to cut the public deficit and debt, reduce unemployment and inflation, and stimulate growth.

To achieve these targets, Señor Rato has proposed a £750 million cut in public spending, the introduction of taxes for the use of many public services, a reduction in subsidies for State enterprises, a freeze in public sector employment and, most controversially, a wage freeze for all public sector employees.

The wage freeze has earned the Government the anger of public sector unions, who have threatened general strikes, boycotts of consumer goods by union members and their families, and other forms of "non-co-operation". Yet Spain's chances of meeting the monetary union deadline are, realistically, rather slim.

In a recent study by the economic database company Consensus Forecast, only one in 20 experts consulted believed that Spain would be in the first wave of EMU. The public debt and deficit are seen by most as insuperable obstacles. Only Italy, of the larger European economies, fares worse.



Looking ahead: Michael Bennett, chairman, and Maurice Bennett, deputy chairman, aim to expand Oasis at home and abroad

Oasis plans new stores as profits jump 40%

BY ALASDAIR MURRAY

OASIS STORES, the high street fashion retailer, yesterday unveiled a 40 per cent increase in half-year profits to £5.2 million, while Michael Bennett, chairman, described the company's current prospects as "encouraging".

Sales during the first two months of this year continued to run ahead of last year, although the company admitted that it had yet to realise the full benefits of its store-opening programme.

During the first six months of the year, like-for-like sales increased 10 per cent while total sales, including new stores, rose 32 per cent to £33 million.

Gross margins were maintained at 55.1 per cent and a maiden interim dividend of 2.1p is payable on November 6. Oasis opened six new stores and four concessions in the UK during the first six months of the year and said that it aims to open two more stores and six new concessions during the second half of the year.

Revenue from overseas licences increased from 1 to 3 per cent of total turnover. The company said that following the success of its first two German franchises it was seeking to open seven new concessions over the next few months and would also experiment with a stand-alone store.

The results were largely in line with expectations, but shares in the company slumped 13p to close at 393p because of profit-taking in the market.

Mr Bennett said that in the medium term he would like to open a total of 50 new stores in both the UK and abroad. The company said it was also extending the Oasis product range with swimwear gradually being rolled out in UK stores.

The total licensing income from overseas operations rose from £79,000 to £237,000. A second store was also opened in Abu Dhabi, with a further shop planned for Saudi Arabia.

Britannia acquires £1.1bn Citibank mortgage book

BY CAROLINE MERRELL

BRITANNIA Building Society has bought Citibank's £1.1 billion mortgage book, which holds loans on behalf of 30,000 borrowers.

The mortgage assets will be held through a subsidiary of the building society and will not be included on its balance sheet. The mortgages themselves will continue to be administered by Citibank for the time being, but Britannia will eventually take over the administration.

Britannia said that it had no plans to reduce the variable interest rate on the loans from its present level of 7.49 per cent. The society offers a variable interest rate of 6.99 per cent and currently has 300,000 borrowers.

John Heaps, Britannia's chief executive, said: "The book will provide us with an additional customer base. We will be maintaining the terms and conditions that they have chosen." The book comprises fixed-rate schemes and loans

where the advance was a very high percentage of the purchase price.

Citibank has sold the loans portfolio because it wants to concentrate on a global banking strategy. Meredith Williams, UK executive director of Citibank Consumer Bank, said: "We want to lend to those who have a wider relationship with the bank as opposed to

stand-alone mortgage-only customers."

Last year, Britannia, a society committed to remaining mutual, bought the £450 million mortgage portfolio of Lloyds Bowmaker, part of the Lloyds Abbey Life group. It said yesterday that it would be interested in buying more mortgage books, if the price was right.

Many building societies try to increase their assets by buying up mortgage portfolios, rather than going through the expense of trying to take on new borrowers. Last year, Birmingham Midshires, the UK's eleventh ranked by asset size, bought mortgage books from Crédit Agricole, Western Trust and Hypo-Bank.

Edinburgh holds payout

BY ROBERT MILLER

EDINBURGH Fund Managers, the international fund management house, has held its interim dividend at 8p a share after reporting pre-tax profits of £3.43 million. The half-year payout will be made on November 1.

Edinburgh, the UK's third-largest investment trust manager, said that the results for

the six months to July 31 were distorted by £5.41 million of exceptional expenses. These were largely as a result of Edinburgh's takeover of Dundee, a rival Scottish fund manager, in March. Staff numbers in the integrated group have fallen from 271 to 193, and Dundee's old offices in Edinburgh and Chicago

have been closed. The Dundee acquisition, which more than doubled Edinburgh's funds under management to £7.4 billion, will inevitably impact on the group's full-year results, Edinburgh said. Earnings per share, excluding exceptional items, fell to 21.2p compared with 23.1p in the same period last year.

BUSINESS ROUNDUP

Healthcall weaker in 'turbulent' market

HEALTHCALL, the medical services providers, saw a sharp fall in first-half profits with no immediate prospect of improvement. Pre-tax profits for the six months to June 30 fell from £3.9 million to £2.9 million. Earnings per share dropped from 4.46p to 3.29p and the interim dividend remained unchanged at 1.65p. Maurice Henchey, the chief executive, said: "The results reflect increased turbulence in the market for our duty doctor services arising from rapidly changing methods of service delivery and increased competition from publicly subsidised services."

Mr Henchey expects the turbulence will continue into next year before a new pattern of service is established. The share price yesterday dropped from 81½p to 72½p. The dividend registration date is October 15 with payment on November 11.

Fiscal may expand

FISCAL, the property company which lets exclusively to the Government, is in talks which may lead to expansion into non-property services under the Private Finance Initiative (PFI), taking it into services such as cleaning, air conditioning and security. In the six months to June 30, Fiscal bought three investment properties for £11.7 million. Turnover rose by 16 per cent, to £3.41 million. With lower operating costs, taxable profits rose 39 per cent, to £1.12 million. A 0.72p interim (0.65p) will be paid on November 15.

Yeoman set for market

SATELLITE-RESPONSIVE map-reading mice are coming to the market via the flotation of Yeoman, which hopes to raise £4 million on the Alternative Investment Market later this year. Its product uses satellite guidance to pinpoint the user's position on a conventional paper map. The device is guided by the US government's global positioning system, a constellation of navigational satellites that emit a pulse allowing receivers to plot a map position. The company says it already has 5 per cent of the UK maritime market.

Geo aims for £10m

CEO INTERACTIVE MEDIA, an Internet software company started in 1994 by former members of the high-technology unit of the Israel Defence Forces, is to float this autumn on the Alternative Investment Market. Geo intends to raise £10 million or more by selling about 10 per cent of the shares to institutional investors through Panmure Gordon, the underwriter. The company's main product, Emblaze, uses a proprietary compression technology to allow real-time delivery of animation, sound and video using standard phone lines.

Mapeley names backers

MAPELEY HOLDINGS, one of the final six contenders for the project to buy and manage the Department of Social Security's estate property, yesterday revealed the names behind the partnership. The DSS had set a deadline of noon for bids. Mapeley's 11 backers include Herbert Smith, the UK law firm, EM Warburg Pincus, the American venture banking firm, NationsBank, the US bank, Bankers Trust, a wholesale financial institution, and Argent Group, the UK property and development company.

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THE TIMES UNIT TRUST INFORMATION SERVICE

[illegible]

Bell sounds alarm over security flaw in smart card chips

FROM RICHARD THOMSON IN NEW YORK

MILLIONS of smart cards, the high-technology plastic cards with a microchip containing "virtual cash", may have a security flaw enabling criminals to counterfeit them, according to a leading US research company.

The discovery could come as a severe blow to the public acceptability of smart cards, which depend heavily not only on their convenience as a method of payment but on their security from interference. Smart cards have been hailed by some as the key to a cashless future.

Bell Communications Research, one of the leading information technology research organisations in the US, claims in a paper published this week that the cards were not tamper-resistant as their issuers had claimed them to be. They may be open to possible piracy, in effect allowing criminals to create cash or read personal information.

Theoretical research showed that the chips contained in smart cards might be manipulated simply by putting them in a microwave oven.

Bell Communications, also known as Bellcore, is owned by the regional US Bell telephone companies which are planning to market smart cards as a way of paying for long-distance phone calls.

Cards such as Mondex, which is on issue in the UK and Europe, contain a memory chip which can be filled with electronic money and personal financial information about the card-holder.

The major credit card networks, Visa and Mastercard, have developed smart cards which are particularly popular in France.

However a flaw allowing criminals to read the information in stolen cards and fill the chips with "counterfeit" electronic money could undermine the use of the cards.

"This is a significant discovery because it is a new attack on the system," said Bill Barr, vice-president of the Smart Card Forum, a trade group of 230 US companies and government agencies. The card industry would have to learn how to respond to the possibility of "physical attack" on smart cards, he said.

Although no attempts to counterfeit cards have yet been recorded, Mr Barr said that if the possibility exists it was only a matter of time before someone tried it. Bellcore said it was advising some companies on ways to build defences into their cards.

However some of the largest card companies were cautious about Bellcore's research. "This is speculative," said Chris Jarman, vice-president of chip card technology at Mastercard. Card company executives said the danger to the system was no greater than that of counterfeiting \$20 notes.



Richard Mais said CNC remains on the lookout for acquisitions, having bought Brightstone Properties in May

CNC sees upturn in housing

By FRASER NELSON

GRADUAL rent increases and a drop in the number of empty properties were yesterday identified by CNC, the property group, as showing the first solid signs of recovery in the housing market.

Richard Mais, CNC's managing director, said that since the end of the summer holiday, occupier demand had sharpened

against a backdrop of a drop in the number of quality properties available.

His comments came as the company, formerly Clarke, Nickolls & Coombs, returned taxable profits of £1.02 million (£617,000) in the six months to June 30. £126,000 of this was generated by Brightstone Properties, which CNC

bought in May in a hostile bid. Mr Mais said the company remained firmly on the acquisition trail, and had increased its cash pile from £113,000 to £1.34 million since last year.

Earnings were 0.48p (0.35p) per share, but more were in issue. The interim dividend, due on December 5, is 0.13p (0.12p).

3i sets its sights on Singapore

BRITAIN'S biggest venture capital provider, 3i, plans a presence in Singapore by the start of next year to plug into the power of the Asian Tiger economies and the growing army of successful entrepreneurs there (Martin Waller writes).

The operation in Singapore will be a limited one at first, but 3i is trawling its senior staff for a director to be sent out to set up an office to serve both the island state and Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines at first.

Around a tenth of 3i's assets are in continental businesses, but the venture capitalist's exposure outside Europe is limited. An operation in the US is being run down and 3i is exiting an Indian venture, leaving just one offshoot in Japan.

Singapore is seen as the ideal base to expand into the Far East. It is politically stable with a well-developed infrastructure and regulations governing the financial services sector are also among the most strictly enforced in the area.

Leading bankers covet 'six pillars' of Australia's financial sector

Rachel Bridge anticipates a report that is expected to signal a significant shift in policy on takeovers by foreign institutions

The world's biggest banks are keeping an extremely close eye on Australia while they await publication of the report after a major inquiry into the financial sector which looks set to give the green light to a wave of takeover activity. Indeed, speculation has intensified that one or two foreign players may be tempted to beat the rush and make a move before the report of what was known as the Wallis inquiry is handed down in the next few months.

Heading the list of those known to be interested in making an acquisition down under are Lloyds TSB — which was recently thwarted in its bid for New Zealand's Trust Bank — The Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation, and Dutch banks ABN Amro and ING.

One Sydney analyst said: "The shake-up certainly looks set to make it a lot easier for foreign banks to take over an Australian bank — and it may not be confined to the most obvious predators. Bank of Scotland, for example, came out of nowhere to snap up BankWest in Western Australia." The Wallis inquiry was set up by the Australian Government to carry out a full-scale review of the financial sector in a bid to make it more internationally competitive and to attract more overseas players to Australia. Peter Costello, the Federal Treasurer, said: "I think a lot of international financial companies think, when you're looking for a regional Asia-Pacific financial headquarters, you go to Singapore and Hong Kong. I'd like to say to them, come to Australia."

In the most wide-ranging inquiry since 1981, the Wallis committee has been charged specifically with solving the thorny question of what to do about mergers and takeovers. These are currently prevented between Australia's four biggest banks and its two leading life assurance groups under the so-called "six pillars" policy introduced by Paul Keating, the former Prime Minister. But all four of the banks — ANZ, Westpac, National Australia Bank and Commonwealth Bank — have been lobbying hard and loud to get the existing restrictions scrapped.

This means that unless it makes a move soon, any foreign bank looking to join the party is likely to face some fierce competition from Australian banks themselves for their prey. Don Argus, managing director of National Australia Bank, argues that Australian banks need to acquire "critical mass" in domestic markets if they are to become big enough to com-

pete internationally. And few analysts doubt that NAB would waste little time in launching a bid for one of its rivals — Westpac or ANZ — if the rules allowed.

The signs are that the banks' clamour is being heard: Stan Wallis himself, the businessman heading the inquiry, recently said: "What we want in this sector is a more competitive outcome. It does not always follow that when you have four or five participants you necessarily get the right competitive outcome. There is no question that in Australia we have got an overbranched banking sector; there are some very large costs there at the moment."

Not every one is happy, however, and critics argue that a wave of bank mergers would not produce a more efficient lower-cost environment, they would simply concentrate economic power further. The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission said: "The argument that Australians should bear the burden of anti-competitive structures at home because this may make some few institutions more competitive on the world stage is entirely unsatisfactory."

St George Bank, the regional bank in which NAB has a stake, has said: "The globalisation argument from major banks is absolute nonsense — one of the reasons NAB wants to take over this bank is to take us out of the market. Consumer banking markets in Australia are local and domestic in nature, not global."

Where the big four banks are less united is on the issue of opening the door for foreign banks to come and play. ANZ, long rumoured to be the object of The Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation's desires, has warned the committee that allowing foreign ownership in the finance sector can lead to a diminishing of major head office skills and management talent.

Citing the example of New Zealand, in which all the banks are foreign-owned, ANZ says: "Taken to its logical conclusion, the end result must be a significant brain drain because the most talented management leaves to work in the head office of the overseas acquirer and because the opportunities for employment of allied professional services and new graduates are diminished."

Certainly, there is no sign that the appeal of Australia is waning overseas: in the past year both Bank of Scotland and AXA — the French insurance group which took over National Mutual, the life group — entered the market for the first time.

The end result must be a brain drain because the most talented leave to work in the head office of the overseas acquirer

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■ VISUAL ART 1

The lonely, the wounded and the bewildered: all this is caught in a new show by Sam Taylor-Wood



■ VISUAL ART 2

Everyday objects are rarely what they seem when Jordan Baseman gets to work at the Saatchi Gallery

THE TIMES
ARTS

■ VISUAL ART 3

... while the photographs by Candida Hofer present familiar domestic scenes in a strange new light



■ VISUAL ART 4

Fifty years of highly varied painting by Philip Meninsky go on show at Kingston Museum

VISUAL ART: New London shows; and Richard Cork on the sad images created by two young artists

ESTELLE THOMPSON's large abstract paintings have gone through a general shift. Instead of seeming to picture a patterned cloth surface, the expanded warp and weft of tartan or twill, the "hands on" appearance of the rubbed-under painting allows a greater distinction between one layer and another. Heavy opaque red in *Red Flats* (1996) is stretched across the four corners, but leaves a sharp outlined negative cross, like a slit in a castle wall. Although the show is full and works of different "styles" seem to rub shoulders with each other, Thompson's tendency to over-finish her paintings is held in check in the recent work.

Estelle Thompson at Purdy/Hicks Gallery, 65 Hopton Street London SE1 (0171-401 9229) until Oct 19

● HAVING photographed, among other things, foyers, staircases, waiting areas, meeting rooms and conference facilities in public and municipal buildings across Europe for nearly 20 years, Germany's Candida Hofer knows exactly what she wants and where to look. The tilt of a shiny marble floor, the inevitable multibulbed light that hangs over a

GROUND
THE GALLERIES

staircase, the wall of window that runs from floor to ceiling with yards of curtaining, can all help the colour-melt into a general pearliness. But the presentation of these empty, unsung, often unnoticed places in this way can lack a specificity that encourages extra attention.

Candida Hofer at Robert Prime 60/61 Warren Street, London W1 (0171- 916 6366) until Oct 26

● THIS set of black and white photographs by the American artist James Welling of lace factories in Calais is displayed interestingly. Dense and intense clusters of photographs have been hung on only two of the four gallery walls. Giant vats, bobbins and looms photographed in workshops, on factory floors and in laboratories seem to provide a dark density of information. Despite contemporary lettering on labels, strip lighting and other details the machinery seems to belong to a 19th-century record of industry, and yet these

rich and exquisite pictures carry a matter-of-fact independence about them that separates them from documentation. James Welling at Camden Arts Centre, Arkwright Road, London NW3 (0171-435 2643) until Nov 10

● WHILE Welling might play with the look and function of photographic history, Andrew Lord, who makes huge, rough-edged decorative vessels, deals with the implications of a craft tradition. *Sorrow* consists of 30 very large dark pieces which parade in a great chunk across the gallery floor. Jugs with pouting lips, chunky elaborate handles and skirted bases sit like tangible and fallible caricatures. Heavy metallic powder seems fired in with the clay, while small patches or splashes of gold are melted on after firing. The obvious touch and moulding involved in the making of each lumpenly delicate sculptural piece is echoed by a series of crayon outline drawings banked against the wall. Andrew Lord at Camden Arts Centre, Arkwright Road, London NW3 (0171-435 2643) until Nov 10

SACHA CRADDOCK



Epitome of a troubled soul: Dexter Fletcher plays one of the central figures in Sam Taylor-Wood's film, *Pent-Up*

Distress signals
from lonely hearts

Among the many young women who contribute so powerfully to the vitality of new British art, Sam Taylor-Wood charges her work with a pungent sense of loneliness, dissatisfaction and bewilderment. Entering the darkened immensity of the excellent Chisenhale Gallery, where her ambitious new film installation fills the whole of one wide wall, is like stumbling on a series of wounded, intimate disclosures. We feel intrusive.

Each of the five separate projections, shot on 16mm, concentrates on an isolated individual. All in distress, they nevertheless range from manic agitation to hunched dependency. The rumpled youth on the far right grimaces and writhes as he paces outside a house, swearing to himself and bellowing up at the windows. The woman next to him is even more voluble, moving restlessly around the counter of a bar. But she is less easy to make out in the subdued lighting, and her boozey recriminations are no more coherent.

As I scanned the wall, trying to decide which monologue to settle on, I found myself returning to the young man in the middle. Pacing through his flat in boxer shorts, he looks unshaven and hung over. He mutters to himself, appraises his body sceptically in the mirror and slumps on a bed, hanging his head upside-down from the side.

His actions are uneventful, and culminate merely in the act of climbing into a bath, but the man's dissatisfaction is convincing. His tense restraint, subtly conveyed by Dexter Fletcher, compares well with the style of the figures on his right. He reinforces the side of the work, *Pent-Up*, and mediates between their theatricality and the less demonstrative behaviour of the people to his left.

One, an older man played by the reformed criminal John McVicar, sits in his armchair and admits to a sense of despair. Static, soft-spoken and wearing only a sweatshirt and shorts, he contrasts with the crisply-dressed formality of the middle-aged woman on the far left. Walking along a pavement, she seems at first the most controlled member of Taylor-Wood's cast. But then she breaks the unwritten code of the street by talking to herself, often loudly and with a reined-in vehemence.

Any attempt to describe *Pent-Up* as a sequence of monologues falsifies the impact of the whole installation. Taylor-Wood makes sure that it is, at all times, a tantalising work to absorb. We are constantly wrenched from one film over to another, distracted by sudden cries or emphatic gestures. *Pent-Up* remains fiercely fragmented, even if these solitary figures sometimes appear to be responding to one another in odd, unpre-

dictable exchanges. This tension between the reality of loneliness and the possibility of shared experience is reminiscent of Taylor-Wood's most outstanding earlier work, *Killing Time*. Projected on four separate screens, each containing a single figure in different surroundings, it alerted me to her remarkable talent. Rather than talking, the people in *Killing Time* all mine roles in Strauss's opera *Elektra*. But they do not try to match the heightened drama of the parts they have been given. Often bored, they lip-synch their way through the music without any involvement in the drama.

The gulf between Strauss's romanticism and their mundanity has a poignancy of its own.

The people in *Pent-Up* may be more angry than their predecessors in *Killing Time*, but the two works are finally united by Taylor-Wood's fascination with an overall mood of helplessness. All her people seem to be trapped. They may yearn for alternative lives, and in *Pent-Up* be more ready to protest about their predicaments. But their vulnerability is beyond dispute, and the solitude afflicting everyone in Taylor-Wood's work ends up revealing a great deal about the frustrations of existence in the 1990s.

Stunted life is also an overriding preoccupation in the work of Jordan Baseman, the most impressive contributor to the latest Saatchi Gallery show. Born in Philadelphia but a London resident for the past decade, Baseman often

takes found objects as his springboard. By the time he has finished with them, though, they take on an identity alarmingly at odds with their former character.

From afar, the colossal words "I love you" look as if they are simply painted on the white wall. Close-to, they turn out to sprout human hair. The dark, thin tendrils dangle down limply, suggesting that all three words have long since become overgrown. At the slightest breath, they tremble like tall grass reacting to a breeze. The words' unequivocal declaration is countered, indicating that such a head-

long commitment is bound to be short-lived. Hair is inescapable in Baseman's perturbing art. More tendrils spring out of a child's conventional white shirt, slung from a hanger on the wall. Both the shirt and its young owner appear to have been overwhelmed by some unstoppable growth, as if puberty had arrested in a premature and grotesque rush.

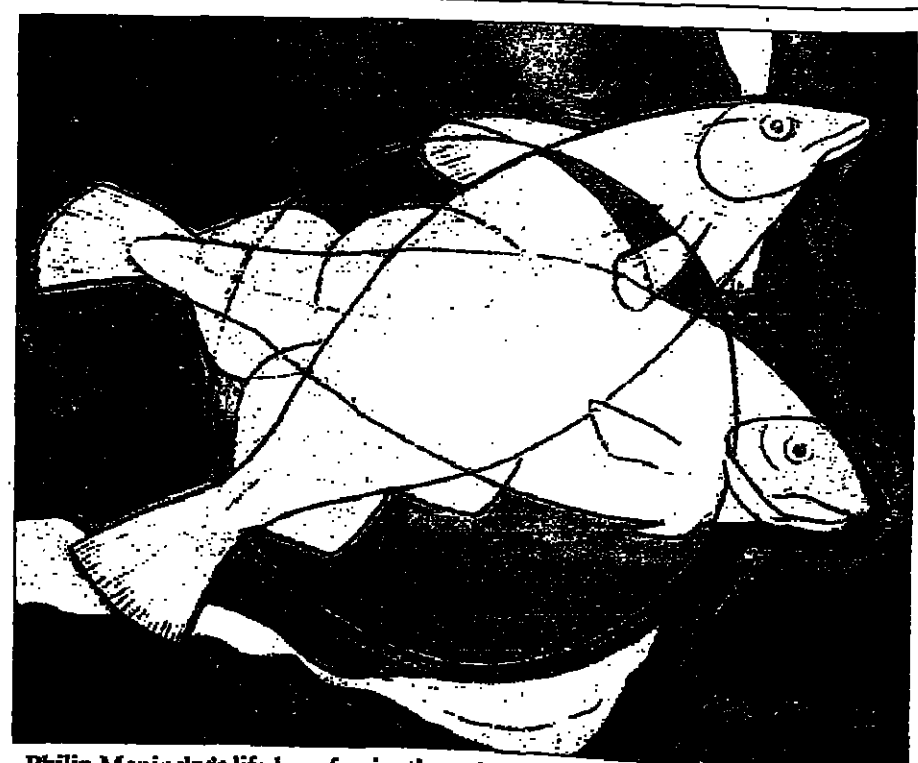
Even when dealing with adulthood, Baseman's work insists that nothing adds up. *Call Me Mister* consists principally of a man's shirt torso, complete with collar and necktie. But child's sleeves grow out of the shoulders, suggesting that the wearer is hopelessly immature. Human hair courses down the centre, compounding the imbalance in an almost monstrous way.

Wherever you look, Baseman is preoccupied with bizarre, unchecked disjunction. Two shoes lie on the floor,

outrageously extended into brazen, phallic forms. They look like an assertion of masculinity run riot, but anyone attempting to wear these elongated brogues would soon realise how fatuous they really are. Comedy plays a subversive role in much of Baseman's work. At his most puckish, he is capable of lodging wisdom teeth in pink mouth braces and transforming them into winged creatures. *Up, Up and Away* is the work's title, and they do certainly appear to be relishing their airborne freedom. At the same time, though, both teeth and braces remain gruesome enough to make the entire sculpture repellent as well as festive. As for *Surrender*, the petals borne upwards by a cluster of winged rocco cherubs turn out to contain an assortment of teeth. They look like rotting chocolates, gift-wrapped for a journey to heaven.

The darkest side of Baseman's haunted imagination is more potent, though. On one wall, the skinned pelt of a tabby cat and a collie dog hang next to each other. But their heads are modelled, and the cat seems to gaze disconsolately down through glass eyes at its vanished body. The fact that both animals' paws, legs and tails have been preserved only makes their corporeal loss grimmer still. Their pelt is so resilient enough to remind us that humans can relish them as trophies. In this context, however, they look forlorn and far more damaged than the loners who lament their pain in Taylor-Wood's cinematic confessional.

● *Pent-Up* at the Chisenhale Gallery (0181-981 4518) until Oct 27; Young British Artists VI at the Saatchi Gallery (0171-624 8299)



Philip Meninsky's life-long fascination with landscape, still-life and the human figure can be seen in *A Journey Through the Eyes*, a retrospective of 50 years of painting by Meninsky. The exhibition is at the Kingston Museum, Wheatfield Way, Kingston upon Thames (0181-546 5386) until October 19

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تکذا من الأصل

THEATRE

Gene Wilder is just one of the big stars who have been lured back to the live theatre

MUSIC 1

Colin Matthews' massive *Renewal* is premiered to mark the 50th anniversary of Radio 3

THE TIMES ARTS

MUSIC 2

... while at the Wigmore, six top string quartets work together on a Beethoven cycle

TOMORROW

Rise of the phoenix: how Venice is rebuilding La Fenice Opera House

Gene Wilder makes his West End debut... and Al Pacino puts his celebrity behind an ailing Broadway theatre

It's a stage many film stars love to go through

When Gene Wilder opens in the West End in Neil Simon's *Laughter on the 23rd Floor* this week, few in the audience will be aware that the American actor's London stage debut will see him back in the medium where he began.

In 1962 — long before he became known as the frizzy-haired star at the centre of Mel Brooks's film comedy stable — Wilder was a supporting player to the likes of Richard Johnson, Michael Redgrave and Googie Withers in Graham Greene's *The Complainant* on Broadway. He also appeared with Helen Hayes in a play called *The White House*, and with Carol Channing in Shaw's *The Millionaires*.

It was during the Broadway run of Murray Schisgal's *Luv* that Wilder took a leave of absence to film his celebrated cameo as the undertaker in *Bonnie and Clyde*. He got his part in *The Producers*, the film that made him a star, after appearing opposite Mel Brooks's girlfriend (now wife), Anne Bancroft, in a Broadway revival of *Mother Courage*. Then, as now, the theatre was where careers were launched.

"I didn't set out on any plan to get to the movies," says Wilder, whose training — a year at Bristol Old Vic included — was entirely in theatre. During the run of *Mother Courage*, he recalls: "People would say, 'Don't you want to go to Hollywood? And I would say, 'What am I going to do? I'll go to Hollywood, walk into an office, and there will be a producer smiling, going, 'I hear you're a funny guy.'"

The point was, says Wilder, "I couldn't walk into an office and be funny. But if someone saw me in a play, I thought, then maybe — just maybe — I could."

Wilder is hardly alone, of course, in returning to the medium that spawned him. Glenn Close received

five Academy Award nominations between 1982 and 1988, all the while returning to the theatre where she has won three Tony Awards. Broadway's biggest hit of the moment is Eugene O'Neill's *Hughie*, starring Al Pacino (see article, right).

Many British actors begin on the stage and regularly go back there, with Ralph Fiennes's commitment to the medium typifying the attitude of many performers of his generation. "He's determined not to lose touch with the theatre," says an admiring David Hare, the adapter of Chekhov's *Ivanov*, in which Fiennes will star at the Almeida early next year. "The pressure to make movies all the time is relentless. American agents just don't understand. Everything in the world is being thrown at Ralph, and he wants to play difficult, early Chekhov."

It is the previous acting generation in England that can develop a resistance to the theatre, perhaps because success on stage has seemed comparatively easy. "I've never been comfortable in the theatre," Anthony Hopkins told *Variety* last year. "I've done it all, but I never enjoyed it."

Ian McKellen could have spent his life roving from part to part in the classical theatre. Instead he has chosen to spread his wings in film — emboldened by the response to a film performance in *Richard III*, itself rooted in a prior stage success.

If Alec Guinness, among others, was correct to refer to the status of film in England as "a guilty pleasure", small wonder that theatre stars here are going to relish a medium from which they might once have felt shut out. "I don't think I ever heard of people like me doing movies," says Eileen Atkins, who is embracing the cinema in her sixties by writing two films, starting in one of them. "Larry Kramer wanted me for *Women In Love* and I remember thinking, 'No, I'll never get it; I don't

"I did not set out on any plan to get to the movies"



Gene Wilder provokes a giggle on Shaftesbury Avenue before rehearsing *Laughter on the 23rd Floor*

do movies. I always thought I was too plain."

The Canadian actress Kate Nelligan was embarked on a major stage career in Britain when she left in the early 1980s to conquer Broadway. Now settled in Manhattan, Nelligan is content with the altogether different reputation she has developed as a first-rate character actress

in films such as *The Prince of Tides*. "After a while," she says, "I didn't care whether people saw my Portia."

In a sense it is the classic scenario — those accomplished in one medium come to crave the other. Kathy Bates did a play a year in New York until she won the 1990 Academy Award for *Misery*; since then, she has not done a single one. Jessica Lange, conversely,

had barely stood on a stage until she took on the role of Blanche Du Bois in *A Streetcar Named Desire* on Broadway in 1992, a performance she will soon repeat in the West End.

MATT WOLF

Laughter on the 23rd Floor opens on Thursday at the Queen's Theatre, Shaftesbury Avenue, W1 (0171-494 5040)

Who better to play the godfather?

Al Pacino's first Broadway stint in four years was to have been a perfunctory five weeks in Eugene O'Neill's *Hughie* at the Circle in the Square theatre. But after Circle, Broadway's oldest nonprofit theatre, declared bankruptcy in the middle of the run, Pacino rallied to help the theatre. He extended *Hughie*'s run and stipulated that 100 tickets at each performance will sell for \$20 (Circle's regular price is \$55).

But what is happening inside, on the oblong stage sparsely furnished by David Gallow with two chairs, ashtray stands and a skeletal counter to suggest a seedy hotel lobby?

There, too, Pacino is in command. Written with unaccustomed humour, O'Neill's 1941 two-act play is a poignant look at a need for illusions. In the wee hours of a day in 1928, Eric Smith, a gambler, lurches in from a drinking spree. His luck has soured ever since *Hughie*, the hotel's former receptionist, died. Meeting the new receptionist, Eric begins to recount his adventures with *Hughie* — the prostitutes he passed off as chorus girls, the traps they shot with real money, all of it Eric's, so that *Hughie* could also feel like a high roller. Eric's fantasies became *Hughie*'s escape from his dreary existence, and Eric's real luck was *Hughie*'s friendship.

Virtually an extended monologue, the hour-long one-act begs for a virtuoso turn, and Pacino provides it. Planting his feet wide to steady himself, Pacino's Eric is a Damon Runyon character on the skids. By turns *Hughie* was "just a sucker" and a pal, says Eric, and Pacino captures the loneliness behind the bonhomie, the despair beneath the bravado.

There is perhaps a little more darkness in Eric, who has run errands for sinister

figures, than Pacino finds. Costumer Candice Donnelly's good-guy cream outfit unwisely softens the character, too. O'Neill envisioned the gambler in a loud tie and a garish blue shirt "that sets teeth on edge", but here, except for needing a shave and shower, Eric dresses tastefully.

As director, Pacino has solved the problem of O'Neill's elaborate stage directions for the clerk, who seldom speaks. Lengthy interior monologues meant to guide the actor's responses to Eric are made



Al Pacino, mesmerising in *Hughie*

audible. That helps to flesh Paul Benedict's deadpan clerk, coincidentally named Hughes, into a Walter Mitty. His musings about the wailing sirens and garbage trucks outside — "I'd bang those cans louder than they do!" — echo through a microphone as Eric rambles on. Hughes is clearly *Hughie*'s doppelganger: married with children, bored, living a safe life and trapped in a dead-end job. He tries to ignore Eric, but in the end he, like *Hughie*, succumbs to Eric's illusions.

EDWARD KARAM

A guide to the best available recordings, presented in conjunction with Radio 3

ORLANDO GIBBONS reviewed by Roderick Swanton

THE posthumous reputation of Orlando Gibbons (1583-1625) has rested mostly on his Anglican liturgical repertory, although he was equally at home in secular music. There are 11 CDs containing church music by Gibbons, of which seven are devoted exclusively to it. Mostly the singing style is respectfully Anglican. Typical is the excellent collection on Naxos (8.553130) by the Oxford Camerata directed by Jeremy Summerly. Its best performances are of smaller-scale anthems, where polished balance shows to good effect.

However, my first choice among anthem collections is Hosanna to the Son of David (Conifer 75605-51231-2, £14.99), sung by the mixed choir of Trinity College, Cambridge, under Richard Marlow. It contains a feast of verse anthems as well as full anthems, the former accompanied by the magnificent viol consort, Fretwork. The choir is at its best in the quieter reflective anthems such as *O Lord in Thy wrath*. Recommendable also are the anthem and service anthologies by King's College Choir, Cambridge, under Ord and Wilcock (Decca Ovation, 433 677-2) and New College, Oxford under Edward Higginbottom (CRD 3451). Enjoyable as these church music CDs are, I wonder



whether the respectful Anglican style is right for Gibbons, given his verbal sensitivity. Closer in spirit and execution, I think, are the instrumental recordings, particularly of his magnificent viol music. All the CDs devoted to, or containing, this are outstanding, and the Fantaisies Royales on Auvidis Astrée (E 7147, £14.99) are only pre-eminent because the disc is devoted exclusively to Gibbons. Equally enthralling are the performances on Hyperion CDA 66395, with violins rather than viols, by the Parley of Instruments, entitled *Musique for Prince Charles*.

If I had to select only one Gibbons disc, especially as a starter, it would be the Naxos anthology of *Consort and Keyboard Music*, *Songs and Anthems* (Naxos 8.550603, £7.99). I especially like the earthy interpretations of Red Byrd whose "burring" pronunciations and conscious anti-polish give a zest to the music that is utterly compelling, both historically and musically.

● To order the recommended recording, with free delivery, please send a cheque payable to The Times CD Mail to 250 Western Avenue, London W3 6XZ or freephone 0500 418419; e-mail: bid@mail.bogo.co.uk
● Next Saturday on Radio 3 (9am): Ravel's Piano Trio

CONCERTS: A British first and a Beethoven cycle

A sum of fine parts

IT IS not every day you hear a 50-minute, four-movement work with a choral finale by a leading British composer. But as part of the celebrations to mark the 50th anniversary of BBC Radio 3, Colin Matthews' *Renewal* (a BBC commission) received its premiere on Sunday night.

The musical material was not originally conceived as a composite work. The third movement, "Broken Symmetry", was a self-sufficient 20-minute structure, and the second movement, "Threnody", was derived in part from the *Memorial* of 1992. Added to the eight-minute "Intrada", and the final movement, setting lines of Ovid, they formed a structure that is self-evidently spatchcocked together.

Although the shape and coherence of *Renewal* as a

BBC SO/Knaussen Festival Hall

whole is less than convincing, there is some very impressive writing among the movements. "Broken Symmetry", with its sinister underlying synopsations and manic energy, is a formidable study in controlled anarchy, while the gradual fragmentation of the oppressive, monolithic textures of "Threnody" is a touching tribute to the late Toru Takemitsu.

The surprise of the choral finale (rendered by the BBC Symphony Chorus) is capped only by the shift to neo-Romantic, tonal harmonies in the coda. The writing is inspired — something I could not say about the "Intrada", whose offstage trumpet fan-

fares sounded aimless. Andrew Davis being indisposed, Oliver Knaussen stepped in to conduct a generally confident performance.

After the interval Petr Altrichter stood in to direct a somewhat hit-and-miss account of Janáček's *Glagolitic Mass*. Scrappy ensemble in strings and brass was not improved by some poor balancing between vocal and instrumental forces. The tenor, Denis Gulyás, for all his rather unsuitably voiced passion, was sometimes obliterated by the orchestra, though Eva Urbanová and Catherine Wyn-Rogers made fine contributions in the soprano and mezzo roles, and the well-drilled BBC Symphony Chorus held its own.

BARRY MILLINGTON

Beethoven with few thrills

Vogler Quartet Wigmore Hall

IN RECENT years London has been lucky with Beethoven. Magnificent musicians have given us memorable cycles of the sonatas and the chamber music. One thinks of Brendel, the Emersons, the Lindseys. But the Wigmore Hall's new series of the complete string quartets is different. The 17 masterpieces have been shared out among six top international quartets "as a symbol of European friendship". I don't know about that, but there will surely be some fascinating contrasts in style and approach.

Opening the series, the Vogler Quartet — former East Germans who have risen fast — did nothing very astonishing, but did it very well. Aside

from a few moments of questionable intonation from the leader, they offer superb technical skills that are all the more effective because they are not flaunted but taken for granted in interpretations of lovely soft-grained lyricism. Few quartets produce a warmer glow in the slow movements: the Adagio cantabile of Op 18 No 2, and especially the glorious Adagio variations of Op 127, were unfolded with a silken serenity.

Missing from a characteristic Vogler interpretation, or at least played down, is much

sense of anger, struggle and anguish. The opening Allegro of Op 95 was delivered with great clarity and intelligence, but there was little sense of a tremendous tussle of ideas — of the hurly-burly of genius tossed about.

Neither here nor in the dazzlingly fast but somehow imperturbable finale did one get any impression of the players digging deep into their own psyches. It was all rather unruffled. But this quartet invests so much thought into its phrasing, and plays with such unanimous style, that the listener readily accepts the elevation of poise and grace over storm and stress.

RICHARD MORRISON

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LAW

● TRILLING NEWS 41
● SURF'S UP 43

Two men and a baby: what of the law?

Chris Barton reviews recent cases that challenge some common assumptions about parenthood, modern relationships and the rights of parental responsibility

William Zachs and his homosexual partner, Martin Adams, revealed recently that they are bringing up a daughter, Sarah Clare. Another couple, Steph and her partner, Sharon, were featured on *Child of Mine*, a Channel 4 documentary about lesbian parents. They, too, are bringing up a child — a little boy who, like Sarah Clare, was conceived through artificial insemination.

The cases challenge some old assumptions. Until recently, both procreation and parenthood proceeded on standard lines. A woman and a man did what came naturally and consequently they sometimes became "mother" and "father".

Having managed that, such couples were not required to demonstrate parenting skills to justify their procreative abilities. The woman would often be married, thereby resolving the difficulty, supposedly inherent in the nature of human reproduction, of identifying the "father".

The first challenge to this monopoly came from scientific advances. DNA testing can now identify the father, and new methods of assisted reproduction can give a child two natural mothers, one genetic and one biological.

But though technology cannot yet realise same-sex procreation, Mr Zachs and Mr Adams seem to have achieved *de facto* co-parenting. In asking whether English law would recognise their status, we should also consider the anonymous lesbian couple who want the fertilised egg of one of them to be implanted in the other, and Stephen Whittle, the female-to-male transsexual, who wishes to be registered as the father of his partner's child.

While many will find it difficult to separate these three cases, the law already does so. Sarah Clare is with us because Dr Zachs paid a woman to be artificially inseminated with his sperm and then to hand the baby over.

Not being married to the mother, Dr Zachs would not, unlike her, have automatic "parental responsibility" under English law. But he would be Sarah Clare's legal "father", and incur a potential duty under, for example, the Child Support Act 1991 and 1995, as well as a right to apply for a "parental responsibility"

order from the court under the Children Act 1989. Sarah Clare would need to have lived with the couple for at least three years before Mr Adams could apply as of right, but he could do so immediately with leave of the court. Such an order would give him most of "all the rights and authority which by law a parent has in relation to a child".

The two lesbians have had their request refused by the Ethics Committee of King's College Hospital on the limited ground that such treatment should be available only to the infertile. Had the women achieved their aim, the baby's position would anyway have differed from Sarah Clare's.

Under the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990, the woman who gave birth would be the mother. There would be no legal father, because the Act specifically excludes the consenting donor from that role, allowing his place to be filled by the woman's male partner. (The latter qualifies only where the couple have received joint "treatment services" from a licensed clinic; if not, the sperm donor would retain legal fatherhood, irrespective of his wishes or intentions.)

What of Mr Whittle, the newly male transsexual, who wishes to be registered as the father of his female partner's child under the Births and Deaths Registration Act 1953? For the moment, the honesty of the couple's approach must frustrate their ambitions.

Such registration depends on the mother agreeing to the father's registration, or on the couple being married. They have not pretended that Mr Whittle is the child's natural father, and his sex change is not recognised under English law at all, let alone for the purpose of allowing him to marry in his chosen gender.

To rectify the non-recognition, he must look to the European Court of Human Rights, which has come closer to such acknowledgement each time it has considered the matter. These dry legal rules do not, of course, begin to address the two real issues, which are whether marriage should be available to such couples (thus permitting joint adoption of children) and whether, in the case of homosexual pairs, it is appropriate for them to act as co-parents.



Martin Adams and William Zachs with Sarah Clare, conceived through artificial insemination

As it happens, neither the 1989 Danish "Law on Registered Partnerships" nor its 1994 Swedish equivalent, include adoption rights in the quasi-marital status that they confer upon same-sex partners.

Yet even the comparatively liberal objections mounted against such parenting — that the children would be denied the role models of both mother and father, that they would be more likely to become gay themselves, and that they would face peer derision — has not been borne out by the results of a number of empirical surveys in America.

Nearer home, in August this year, the Scottish Court of

Session held that there was no fundamental objection in principle to an application for the adoption of a young disabled boy by a homosexual man who proposed to bring him up jointly with his male partner. It was held that: the applicant should be treated as an individual, not a member of a class; the need to safeguard the child's welfare was paramount — and that a judge's personal views or private beliefs are irrelevant. As for cruder objections, some people still need reminding that homosexuals are no more likely than heterosexuals to be pederasts.

● The author is Professor of Family Law at Staffordshire University.

intake should be from a minority, but there are not enough qualified candidates to go round.

Fund-raiser
THE QCs Cherie Booth, Patricia Scotland and Presley Baxendale were among 100 women at the 25th birthday party last week hosted by Denton Hall for Refuge, the women's charity, of which Ms Booth is a trustee. The event raised £3,000.

Sevens up
MORE THAN 30 London law firms are competing in the annual Law Society Sevens rugby tournament sponsored by the bankers Rea Brothers at Richmond Athletic Ground, south London, on Sunday. The prize is the Freshfields Bowl (the firm has won ten times in 12 years).

Roger Looker, corporate finance director, who also chairs the Harlequins Rugby Club, will present the bowl to the winners. If it's Freshfields again, law firms are threatening legal action.

SCRIVENOR

STUART & FRANCIS

LINK can't be beaten

MR Justice Brooke, former chairman of the Law Commission, has joined a lively discussion of the lawyers' electronic network, LINK. Under the heading of *Spanking v Beating*, the Court of Appeal judges commend a Law Commission paper for an up-to-date statement of the law on "lawful correction". The publication is, Mr Justice Brooke says, available in all reputable libraries and should, he adds, be available on the Internet. This might spare the blushes of lawyers who don't want to be heard in libraries asking for something on "lawful correction".

Judge promotion
LORD Goff of Chicheley has been appointed senior Law Lord in place of Lord Keith of Kinkel who retired yesterday. Lord Goff, the second senior Law Lord since 1994, becomes the highest-sitting judge in the land, in that he heads the



Lord Goff: new role

House of Lords Judicial Committee. But Lord Bingham of Cornhill is the most senior practising judge in judicial hierarchy — although he presides over a lower court, the Court of Appeal.

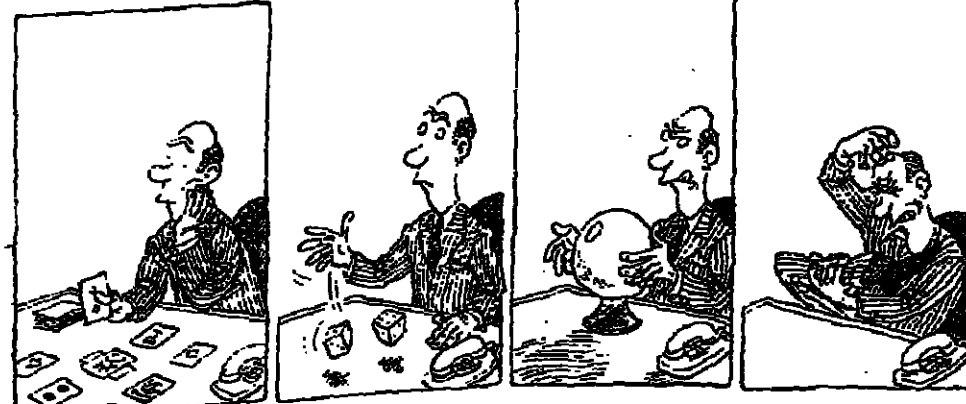
Cue the chairman
LORD Justice Rose, another women barrister at the Bar Council conference on Satur-

day. To a suggestion that the Bar was a hostile environment for women, he answered that on the contrary, he could think of "one or two examples, and happily they are few, where women have been appointed when, if they had been men of comparable ability, they would not have been".

Professor Mary McAleese, Pro Vice-Chancellor of Queen's University, Belfast, said that there was need to change the profession's culture of complacency, "a little of which I heard resonating in Sir Christopher's attitude".

Black Power
LAWYERS from the ethnic minorities are at a premium in New York and law firms are paying up to \$8,000 just for the chance to interview 12 of them at a job fair. Each extra interview costs \$2,500. Under New York Bar rules, 10 per cent of firms' annual

QUEEN'S COUNSEL



STUART & FRANCIS



Adam Vaitilingham on working on a tropical island

Sand in my briefs, sun on my hat

■ ADVERTISEMENTS for legal work on some tropical island frequently appear in *The Times*. This is what it is like to work in the West Indies.

It was a September day and, having endured the grind of 12 months' pupillage, I was in the Middle Temple library studying the careers page in *The Times*. Uninspired by the repetitive offers of corporate work in the City, I found my eyes caught by an ad seeking a young lawyer to work in a country of which I had never heard. Several interviews and three hectic months later, I had been offered the job and I was escaping the English winter. I was en route to Providenciales, the booming financial and tourist heart of the Turks & Caicos Islands in the British West Indies. I had few clues about what to expect, but the place turned out to be the quintessential tropics, with white beaches and turquoise sea.

My firm had only three lawyers and so I was thrown straight in at the deep end. Most of our work involved off-shore finance, an area of law that I knew next to nothing about, and the rest was general advice for clients in the islands, bits and pieces of contract, employment and property law.

There were entertaining moments in the local magistrates' court — I once reached the dizzy heights of defending a hotel client on a charge of possessing undersized lobster tails — and more testing times in the Court of Appeal in the Bahamas. I was given far more responsibility than I would have had at a similar level in England and worked harder than I had expected, but there were no gratuitous long hours just to keep the boss happy — that feeling so familiar to junior lawyers in the City.

My experience was pretty much the same as the other young professionals in the Turks & Caicos and to many of our peers in nearby places such as Bermuda, the Cayman Islands and the British Virgin Islands. Most of the lawyers had taken a chance and come to work for a small local firm with two or three partners. The accountants, on the other hand, had all been seconded from their positions with the big established firms in the UK and

were expected to return to the fold after a couple of years offshore. There was a unanimous feeling of liberation from the stuffy confines of the professions in our home countries.

Away from work, a tax-free salary meant that an apartment right on the beach was easily affordable and a bank loan for the necessary car a formality. Savings stacked up (partly, it must be said, because there were few outlets for spending).

The islanders were easy-going and I met adventurous people from all over the world. We swam in the ocean before and after work and spent weekends sailing or diving around the nearby cays and deserted islands. We played football against teams of illegal immigrants from Haiti (refugees from the troubles in their country 70 miles to the south), and cricket against the Antiguan and Barbadian who made up the local police force.

That was the positive side of life in the islands. On the other hand, the savings were needed to finance ambitious holidays — essential to compensate for the lack of cultural amenities and the social claustrophobia of living on a tiny island. The attitude of many of the expatriates towards the islanders and the disparity in wealth between the two groups caused some friction, and at times I felt about as welcome in both camps as one of the seasonal hurricanes.

But despite the limitations, I stayed beyond my two-year contract period, and it took a lot to tear me away.

You may think that it takes courage to pack up and start a new life in the West Indies, but I am not so sure. If the chance comes along, you should ask yourself only a couple of questions. First, can you risk stepping off the conventional career path? When you come back to England, some would-be employers will pass you by because you have got sand in your shoes or the sun has addled your brain. Any worthwhile employer, though, will recognise the extra dimension that the experience has given you and be glad to snap you up. Secondly, can you leave your friends and family and frantic social life? For me, going away invigorated my friendships (most of them took the chance to visit).



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An offer of a job is always a pleasure to receive. It is a vote of confidence in you, backed up by money and position. But then, in the last paragraph, there are the mean, suspicious words: 'This offer is subject to satisfactory references'. They are probably a formality, but you're not quite sure. What if your reference is poor? What if your employer is upset by the fact that you're leaving? Doubts begin to multiply. There is always someone who doesn't get on with you. What if they ask them?

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Sometimes, of course, there really is a problem about references. All you can then do is warn your prospective employers and explain the circumstances.

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

مكتبة الأمل

Solicitor tries to crash the notaries' party

Most notaries are solicitors, so it is easy to assume that notaries are part of the legal profession. In fact, notaries are a separate profession. They draw up, attest and certify deeds. They trace their origins back to Roman times when they acted as recorders of transactions.

Christopher Stoakes says the cosy world of the scrivener is under attack

In the Middle Ages they were educated scribes under the aegis of the Church. When Henry VIII renounced the Pope's authority, he set up a notarial body called the Court of Faculties under the Archbishop of Canterbury. It still exists. There are about 1,000 notaries around Britain. The idea is that each provincial centre large enough to support one should have one. It is hard to survive as a notary alone which is why so many are also solicitors. The London branch is more select. There are 29 there, called scriveners. They have been going since 1616.

Relations between solicitors and notaries are good. Tony Girdling, the Law Society President, is a solicitor and a notary. Barry O'Meara, a consultant with City solicitors Rowe & Maw, has just been elected Master of the Worshipful Company of Scriveners. But all is not rosy in the scriveners' garden.

Mark Smith, a solicitor with Prince Evans, a London law firm, has been waging war against the scriveners. He wants to be one and they will not accept him. Mr Smith has spotted that notaries on the Continent can make a particularly good living, because they have turned their monopolies, conferred by civil law, over the incorporation of companies, conveyancing and mortgage work, into lucrative commercial practice. In principle, all Mr Smith should have to do is qualify as a notary in the UK — preferably as a scrivener — because he works in London.

then assert his right under the European directive on the mutual recognition of professional qualifications to establish a notarial practice on the Continent.

The problem is qualifying as a notary. To become a notary outside London, one has to pass the examinations set by the Court of Faculties, and then be supervised by a notary for two years. A solicitor has to sit just two papers — one on notarial practice and one on bills of exchange, because notaries have a specialisation in negotiable instruments.

But to become a scrivener requires an apprenticeship of not two but five years. Vacancies are few. Scriveners have an exclusive jurisdiction covering the area within three miles

of the boundaries of the City. This monopoly, dating from 1573, was reaffirmed by the Courts and Legal Services Act 1990. The scriveners argue that there is not enough work to support a lot of them practising exclusively as such, and that free competition could lead to their extinction.

Seeking to establish a practice on the Continent would seem a good solution, but notaries in the UK have not sought to push their European colleagues into mutual recognition of their qualifications. Mr Smith says: "Instead of the mutual recognition of professional qualifications, what we have here is the mutual recognition of monopolies."

If Mr Smith succeeds, the floodgates could open. Lawyers in the UK would qualify as notaries and establish practices on the Continent. Leading City firms with offices on the Continent would be able to augment the services they offered clients.

English firms tend to be larger than their continental counterparts, so local notaries might find it hard to withstand the Anglo-Saxon onslaught.



Scriveners have a jurisdiction covering the area within three miles of the City boundaries

Lawyers hit a high note

Alasdair Steven on a scheme to introduce legal trainees to opera

The Lord Chancellor in Gilbert and Sullivan's enduring *Patience* may have considered that "the law is the true embodiment of everything that's excellent", but it is doubtful whether the wily old buzzard was also referring to opera. Yet today's hard-pressed law students seem keen to take time off from study to dip their toes into the operatic pool.

The new production of Verdi's *La traviata* at the English National Opera, which opened its season last month, was an obvious office winner with famous tunes, lots of love duets, forlorn love, the girl dying in high dudgeon and direction by Dr Jonathan Miller. Dr Miller has a track record among ENO audiences, as his historic production of the maoist *Rigoletto*, also by Verdi, has been popular for almost two decades.

So it seemed an ideal cocktail to set the season off with a bang and to introduce the City merchant bank Schroder, a new sponsor to the Coliseum.

As well as helping to finance production, the bank decided to encourage the young into an opera house. So attractive was the idea that the bank won extra funds from the Department of National Heritage's Pairing Scheme.

It is called Discover Opera and allowed 25 per cent off the price of tickets at the Coliseum for graduates who are on a training scheme. The lucky recipients received not only a card that allowed them discounted tickets, but also a bottle of champagne on their first visit.

The ENO went into overdrive nine months ago and after many calls it sent out 500 packs explaining the procedure. But they had to close the allocations after

300 replies. "It is a pilot scheme," said Jane Livingstone of the ENO, "and funds were limited."

The Coliseum aimed the scheme primarily at professional firms, banks and leading industrial concerns throughout the South East.

The response was heavy, principally from legal firms. Seventy per cent of those who have been granted the offer were from City law firms. Leading the operatic league table were Freshfields and then Macfarlanes.

Ms Livingstone says: "We wanted to bridge the gap between the existing offers we have for school children, and the young executives who may be in London on their first job."

The Discover Opera plan was a joint venture between Schroder and ourselves. It has been a refreshingly successful operation."

Freshfields admitted that it was taken aback by its opera-loving graduates. A spokesman said: "We do have an internal scheme that makes tickets available to our staff. That takes in the ENO, the Barbican and some musicals, but I didn't realise we were budding Domingos."

Certainly, Covent Garden confirmed that it, too, has "many lawyers, barristers and judges" among its regulars. So it is a shame that the profession is not better represented on the stage.

There are often doddery old notaries who come on (Mozart's *Così fan tutte*, and *The Marriage of Figaro*) to marry the wrong soprano to the wrong tenor, but no meaty roles given over entirely to legal eagles. Except dear old G and S. But, then, Gilbert trained as a barrister.

La traviata is at the Coliseum until November 15.

ALISTAIR BONNINGTON

● The author is lecturer in law at the University of Glasgow.
● Letters, page 17

Stalkers must beware in Scotland

Last week the Home Secretary indicated that he wanted to press ahead urgently with laws to outlaw stalking. The recent attempts in the English courts to use other offences to prosecute alleged stalkers underline the problems of a criminal system based largely on statute law.

Last week's conviction of Clarence Morris in Southwark Crown Court, south London, on a charge of assault against Perry Southall by a campaign of harassment

was preceded a few days before by the acquittal at Inner London Crown Court of Dennis Chambers on a charge of assaulting Margaret Bent by frequently following her home and telephoning her.

To Scottish eyes, it appears that English lawyers are tying themselves in knots over the necessity for proof of the requisite criminal state of mind on the part of the defendant and also on proof of some psychological or other damage suffered by the victims. MPs have declared

the need for a new statute dealing with stalking. In Scotland, no such problems arise. Proceeding at common law on the wide and flexible charge of breach of the peace, there would have been no difficulty in securing a conviction in Mr Chambers's case.

All that is required for that charge to be proved against an accused person is that there is the potential for alarm. There is no need to prove that alarm actually occurred. So when more than 100 years ago on a quiet

Sunday night patrol two police officers in Stranraer heard the sound of drunken singing coming from private property, the court convicted the carousing songbird — although nobody complained.

Breach of the peace, then, can be a victimless crime. Even when someone is putting themselves forward as the victim, it is not necessary to prove that they suffered any form of actual hurt. The difficulties experienced by the prosecution on the point of psychological form in the case

against Mr Chambers would not have been experienced north of the border.

Stalking and similar antisocial sexually motivated behaviour has been dealt with in the Scottish courts on a common-law basis for many years, without any drama or crisis. Simple it may be. But it is extremely sensible.

ALISTAIR BONNINGTON
● The author is lecturer in law at the University of Glasgow.
● Letters, page 17

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هكذا من الأصل

Edward Fennell finds that the quality of information technology will shape the speed, accuracy and even the success of a practice

Law firms are only as good as the software

It is only a small exaggeration to say that a law firm is only as good as its information technology. Spending on computer equipment is huge and represents one of the three most important decisions that partners can take (the others being whether to merge or move). The legal trade press regularly carries articles about new products and applications. And earlier this year Professor Richard Susskind published his much discussed book *The Future of Law - Facing the Challenge of Information Technology*, which may turn out to be the seminal text of the way in which the practice of law will develop.

The upshot is that lawyers now find themselves akin to engineering manufacturers. The quality of their technology will shape the speed, accuracy and sophistication of their product. Running a law firm with defunct information technology will be the fastest way to become uncompetitive. Many lawyers, especially the older ones, are still averse to computers and are uncomfortable at a keyboard. Their preference would be to cultivate clients personally and to provide

advice based on experience. That role is still crucial, but no longer enough. Big firms undertaking large transactions or pushing through a high volume of standard processes depend on their technology.

What is more, clients demand it. As Neal Cameron, one of the best consultants in the field and a lawyer, observes: "The most powerful drivers in this market are the clients themselves, who already make extensive use of information technology. Frankly, not having up-to-date IT is no longer an option for most firms because their corporate clients will insist on it."

This vision of the future has a familiar ring for those who follow the wider IT debate. It consists of "virtual law firms" offering advice through the Internet and delivering their products in routine cases with little, if any, human intervention. Legal know-how will be captured within a computer's "mind" and power might pass into the hands of "legal information engineers".

A latent legal market will develop as the use of mass production cuts sharply the price of legal products. The current argument that legal

services are too expensive could be turned on its head as legal advice and processes are packaged in cheap modules.

The vision is clear but the timescale is uncertain. Stuart Holden, of Axxia Systems, a specialist supplier of IT for lawyers, says: "Service-based businesses such as the law may be the last bastion to cling to the old way; but the lure of increased profits by the effective deployment of computers is too strong to be resisted."

This view was endorsed by John O'Neill, of Avenue Legal Systems, who says: "In law firms, productivity is all-important because clients are looking for low charges and value for money. IT can therefore play a key role in raising profitability. The challenge here for suppliers is to refine constantly what they are offering. For example, Blake Lapthorne, the leading south coast firm, bought a new debt recovery system from Beever in July."

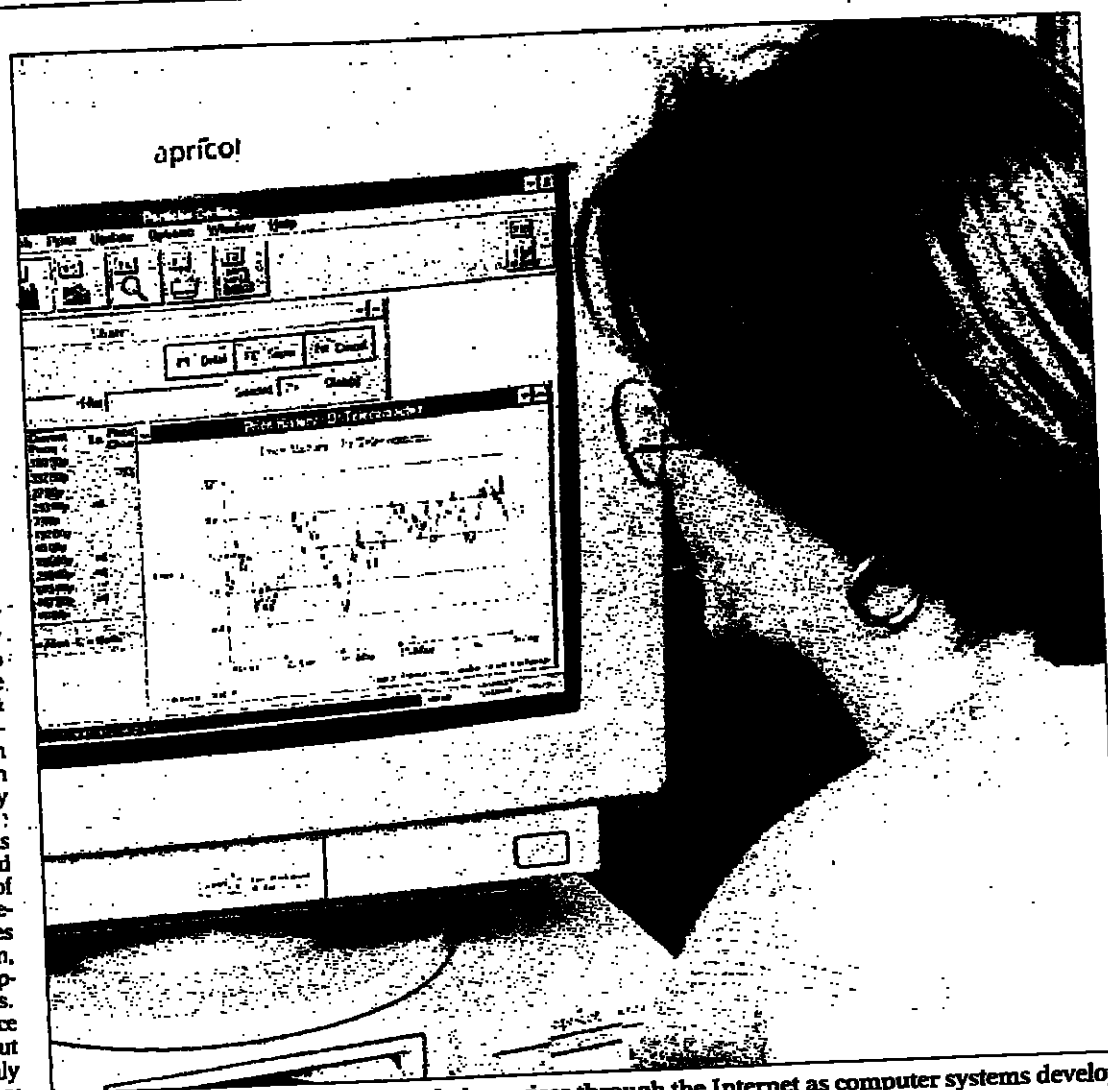
The firm's litigation partner, Nicholas Poole, was quoted as saying: "Being a regional player in litigation and commercial work, we

demand the very best from information technology. We were impressed by a supplier's substantial commitment to Windows 95 and their understanding of the debt-recovery process."

For suppliers that combine an appreciation of legal processes with technological skills, the market is promising. The top London firms are paying millions of pounds for their systems, but even relatively small law firms are now having to invest heavily. For example, the West Country firm of Cann & Hallett, which has only 23 employees, has recently spent £100,000 on a system. This means that each member of staff is backed up by £4,500 of hardware.

One of the immediate paybacks on this investment is that IT should help lawyers to bypass problems of human fallibility. Case Management Systems, in which procedures and timescales are common, should eliminate those missed applications or overdue submissions.

So one anxiety will replace another. Instead of worrying about deadlines for documents, the only thing partners now need to worry about is how to pay for it all.

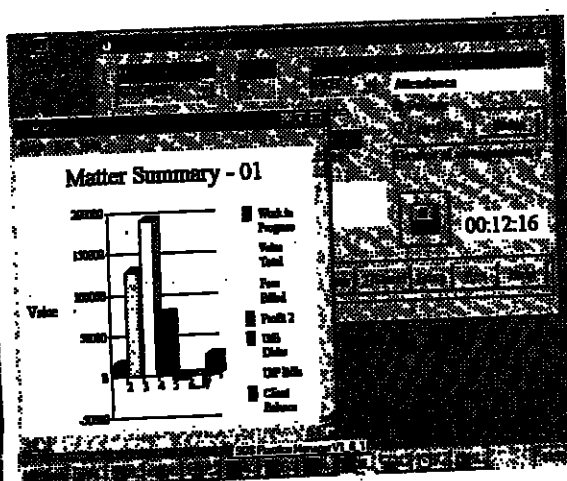


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ATHLETICS

Suspension threat casts a cloud over Games

By DAVID POWELL, ATHLETICS CORRESPONDENT

ATHLETICS by Primo Nebiolo, the president of the International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF), to have athletes suspended if they compete in the hitherto unlicensed 1998 Commonwealth Games, the track programme is due to start 24 hours later. However, given that the venues are 5,300 miles apart and athletes need recovery time from travelling before competing, it is clear that, even with a three-day window, tired performers will be going to the line in Kuala Lumpur.

The World Cup has been fixed for September 11 to 13, the Commonwealth Games athletics from September 13 to 20. In the hope of appeasing the IAAF, the Commonwealth Games Federation is prepared to sacrifice its athletics rest day on September 17 and, perhaps, to stage the closing events on September 21.

The 1998 World Cup will be the first to include prize-money and, without giving ground, the Commonwealth Games might find that the poor standard of competition in Victoria in 1994 might be even weaker come 1998. There would be those athletes who, in choosing between cash or country, would prefer the dollar.

"We would want to adjust the programme in a way that gives the athletes recovery time, which the IAAF would regard as reasonable," David Dixon, the honorary secretary of the Commonwealth Games Federation, said. "The World Cup is over three days and the movement of athletes, I hope, would be phased. There is no reason why athletes involved on day one could not leave after that. We have flexibility in our programme."

Giorgio Reineri, the IAAF spokesman, said that "the problem will be solved". He added that the president of the Malaysian athletics federation was seeking talks with Nebiolo to resolve the difficulty.

The IAAF is to blame for the clash, having set the World Cup date long after the Commonwealth Games was set. This did not stop Nebiolo from saying: "We have informed the Commonwealth Games organisers that we shall not give

them a permit. They must amend their dates."

Although only the women's marathon is pencilled in for the opening day of the Commonwealth Games, the track programme is due to start 24 hours later. However, given that the venues are 5,300 miles apart and athletes need recovery time from travelling before competing, it is clear that, even with a three-day window, tired performers will be going to the line in Kuala Lumpur.

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Lowes, centre, the Great Britain captain for the game against a President's XIII tomorrow, training yesterday

Britain await Australia verdict

By CHRISTOPHER IRVINE

IN THE event of a successful appeal this week by the Super League against a four-year ban in Australia, an international rugby league match against Australia would almost certainly be added to the end of Great Britain's present Pacific tour.

A one-off contest next month, probably in Brisbane, depends first on the three appeal judges at the Sydney Federal Court giving their decision by Friday; any later and it would be difficult to arrange. Second, the Super League would have to overturn the overwhelming ruling against it last February.

Britain's original plan to tour Australia was scuppered by the verdict in favour of the Australian Rugby League (ARL), which is banking on another convincing legal defeat of the Super League. If not, there are likely to be two Australia teams, the ARL version and the Super League one, which Britain would meet

a week after the third international in New Zealand, in Christchurch, on November 1.

The touring party arrived yesterday on a first visit to Fiji, nursing injuries to Alan Huntie, who pinched a sciatic nerve in the defeat of Papua New Guinea last Saturday, and Rowland Phillips, who had an infected cyst removed from his face. They are the main doubts for the interna-



Tollett: first start

tional match in Nadi on Saturday.

Jon Roper misses the game tomorrow, against a Fijian President's XIII, because of knee ligament problems. Bernard Dwyer has recovered from badly blistered feet to reach the substitutes' bench and the Hastings-born, Australian-born, Tollett makes his first start at half back, alongside Karl Hammond, who switches from loose forward.

James Lowes takes on the captain's responsibility at hooker and three survivors from the narrow win against Papua — Joey Hayes, Chris Joynt and Terry O'Connor — are in the starting line-up. Other than heat and humidity, the opposition at Lautoka should not cause too many problems.

Oldham will follow Halifax and Chorley in the past month, in announcing a move to a football ground today, with a sharing arrangement at Oldham Athletic, until a new stadium is built in the town.

Boundary Park successfully staged several Super League games last season.

More controversial is a possible move by Leeds from Headingley to Elland Road. An action group has been formed to oppose the plan by Caspian, the sport and media group that took control of Leeds United and is seeking to acquire the rugby league club.

The fact that they will be seen as no more than pre-season money-making machines has not prevented Wigan and St Helens from agreeing two Christmas and New Year challenge fixtures. The decision is unlikely to impress Jason Robinson, Gary Connolly, Henry Paul and Va'auga Tuigamala, who are not due to rejoin Wigan from rugby union until early January.

GREAT BRITAIN vs. Fijian President's XIII, tomorrow. S. Prescott (S. Helens), J. Hayes (S. Helens), B. J. Hopper (P. M.), K. Senor (S. Helens), J. Catchley (S. Helens), K. Hammond (S. Helens), T. Tollett (London), T. O'Connor (Wigan), J. Lowes (Bradford), N. Harmon (Leeds), D. Bradbury (Leeds), M. Cassidy (Wigan), C. Joynt (S. Helens), Substitutes: A. Sullivan (S. Helens), B. Dwyer (Bradford), A. Morley (Leeds), S. Molloy (Leeds), S. Hogg (Leeds).

SPORT IN BRIEF

Henman achieves highest ranking

TIM HENMAN, the British No 1, has moved up by one place to No 32 in the world tennis rankings, the highest placing of his career. Henman will play in six successive tournaments in Europe before the end of the year in an effort to improve his points tally on the Association of Tennis Professionals computer and move even higher up the rankings.

His campaign begins today in the first round of the Lyons grand prix, which has more than £475,000 in prize-money. Henman faces Guy Forget, of France. Greg Rusedski, the British No 2, has slipped to 84 in the rankings. Rusedski is playing in the Heineken Open in Singapore this week, but has a tough first-round draw against Todd Woodbridge, of Australia, the No 5 seed.

□ Austria's Davis Cup team will meet officials of the International Tennis Federation next week to explain why they forfeited their match against Brazil in São Paulo last month. Thomas Muster walked off court during his match, complaining about the behaviour of Brazilian spectators.

Lancashire name coach

CRICKET: Lancashire have appointed Day Whatmore as their new head coach on a one-year contract. Whatmore, who played in seven Tests for Australia, was coach to Sri Lanka when they won the World Cup in March. Bob Bennett, the Lancashire chairman, said: "Day Whatmore is a proven winner and I am delighted he is coming to Old Trafford. He has experience at international level both as a player and coach." Whatmore, in Kenya with Sri Lanka, said: "I know that Lancashire are the biggest club in England. I relish the challenge of working alongside some very talented players at Old Trafford."

BCF still seeks president

CYCLING: The British Cycling Federation (BCF), which has been without a president since Tony Doyle, the former world pursuit champion, resigned six months ago, has received no nominations for the post in the run-up to its national council meeting in Rotherham on November 2. Jim Hendry, the chief executive, said yesterday that the final outcome rests with delegates at the meeting. The East Anglian division of the BCF has tabled a motion which seeks to define the president as a figurehead. Colin Clews, the federation technical director, believes that uncertainty over the president's status has deterred candidates.

Treble for Taylor

HOCKEY: Robbie Taylor, of Lisnagarvey, scored three times in Ireland's 7-0 victory over Bangladesh yesterday on the second day of the preliminary round of the men's World Cup at Cagliari, Sardinia. The victory takes Ireland to the top of the group table on goal difference from Poland. Taylor scored two goals in the first half and also had a hand in Ireland's two other scores during that period. Wales recovered from a 1-0 defeat by Switzerland in their opening match to beat Egypt 3-2.

Tanner's call for funds

ROWING: David Tanner, the Great Britain manager, yesterday emphasised the urgent need for funding if the team is to build on the successes of the Olympic Games in Atlanta. "We seem to be living on promises," Tanner said. "Some £30 million has been put aside by the National Lottery for sport but the money is not likely to be available until next April, by which time the best coaches will have been snapped up by other countries." Tanner wants to recruit five paid coaches for the Britain senior team.

Underpaid? Unappreciated? Get away from it all this Thursday.

On Thursdays, the exciting new Appointments Section is in three parts. It includes First Executive, especially for graduates and young professionals in the early stages of their careers. There's also Management Plus, covering positions for middle management, and Premier Appointments for senior vacancies.

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CHANGING TIMES

SHEEHAN on BRIDGE

By ROBERT SHEEHAN, BRIDGE CORRESPONDENT
John Armstrong, one of Great Britain's leading international players, was East on this hand from the Grand Masters Pairs.

Dealer East East-West game Match-pointed pairs

♠ 9 8 3 2	♥ K 7	♦ A 2	♣ A Q J 10 4
♠ Q 8 4	♥ 8 4 2	♦ K J 10 6 3	♣ 7 5
♠ A 9 8	♥ Q J 10 9 5 3	♦ A 9 8	♣ 6 3
♠ 7 5	♥ A 6	♦ K 7 5	♣ K 8 2

Contract: Three Hearts by South

East opened One Spade. South made a weak jump overall of Three Hearts and this was passed back to East. Armstrong passed, though I dare say some would re-open with a double. That might have pushed East-West overboard — the defence should prevail against Four Spades. Say that South leads the queen of hearts, which declarer wins (if he ducks, a diamond switch — ducked by South — would finish his chances). Now, if declarer tries to set up diamonds, North can get a ruff, whereas, if he goes for a club ruff in dummy, the defence can continue hearts at every opportunity and declarer will lose trump control.

Against Three Hearts, West led a low spade to East's king and declarer's jack. Armstrong now found the only switch to defeat the contract — the six of hearts. Suppose that he had continued instead with a top spade. Declarer ruffs and ducks a diamond. East has to play ace and another heart to prevent declarer from ruffing a diamond in the dummy, and now declarer

Lead: Four of spades

simply concedes a club. Any other continuation leads to a similar position. However, on the actual defence, declarer had no chance. Had he ducked a diamond, Armstrong would have won, cashed the ace of hearts and continued with a diamond. Perhaps the best hope to make the contract is for the declarer to take the club finesse at trick three, but East wins and returns a club. That leads to two down — the defence make one spade, one heart, two diamonds, a club and a club ruff.

The trials for the England team to play in the Macmillan Camrose Trophy (the home international competition) ended on Sunday at the Young Chelsea Bridge Club. With one match in go, any of four teams could win. King beat Armstrong heavily in the last match to repeat his win of 1995.

RESULTS: 1. P. King (N. Rosen, G. and S. Trudewick) 236 VPs; 2. S. Lodge (P. Crouch, G. Lippin, A. O'Connell) 225; 3. J. Holland (M. Brunner, J. Hassell, B. Hirst) 229.

□ Robert Sheehan writes on bridge Monday to Friday in Sport and in the Weekend section on Saturday.

WORD-WATCHING

By Philip Howard

ONERABLE
a. Magnificent
b. Finite
c. Tiresome

UTRAQUIST
a. A wine-bibber
b. Every-which-whither
c. Cow's fifth belly

DECOLLATION
a. A cold snack
b. A necklace pendant
c. Decapitation
UKORIOLOCAL
a. Looking for a wife
b. Living with the wife
c. Centripetal

Answers on page 50

KEENE on CHESS

By RAYMOND KEENE
CHESS CORRESPONDENT

Russian gold

The team from Russia, led by Garry Kasparov, is now virtually certain of the gold medals in the chess Olympiad in Erevan, Armenia. Russia lead with 33½ points out of 48 ahead of Ukraine, on 30½, and the United States, on 30. England have 29 points, having drawn with China. Outstanding in England side is grandmaster Matthew Sadler, who has scored ten points out of 12, a phenomenal score.

In the women's Olympiad, Georgia lead with 26½ points ahead of Russia and China on 24 and England and Ukraine on 23½. In the twelfth round, England crushed Slovakia 2½-½.

White: I Smirnov (Israel)

Black: G Kasparov (Russia)

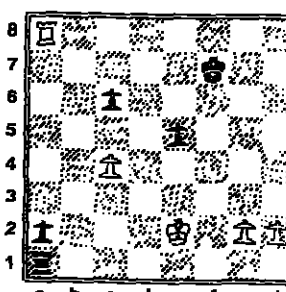
Erevan Olympiad

Armenia, September 1996

Sicilian Defence

1	e4	c5
2	Nf3	d6
3	d4	cxd4
4	Nxd4	Nf6
5	Nc3	a6
6	Bd3	Ng4
7	Bg5	h6
8	Bh4	g5
9	Bg3	Bg7
10	Be2	h5
11	Bxg4	Bxg4
12	h3	Bd7
13	Bf2	Nc6
14	Nd5	Rb8
15	0-0	e6
16	Nac6	bxc6
17	Ne3	d5
18	Rb1	0-0
19	c4	d4
20	Nc2	e5
21	Ne1	f5
22	Nd3	g4
23	Nc5	gxf3

Diagram of final position



The final position is a win for Black on account of the following diabolical trick: 41. Kf2 e4; 42. h4 c3+; 43. Ke2 Rg1; 44. Rxd2 Rg2+ which skewers White's rook.

Times book

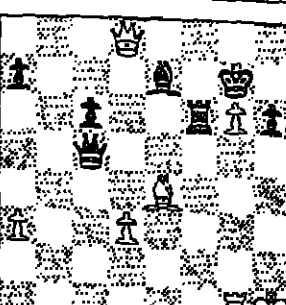
The Times Winning Moves 2 contains 240 chess puzzles from international grandmaster Raymond Keene's daily column in The Times, and is available now from bookshops or from B. T. Batsford Ltd (tel: 01376 321276) at £6.99 plus postage and packing.

□ Raymond Keene writes on chess Monday to Friday in Sport and in the Weekend section on Saturday.

WINNING MOVE

By Raymond Keene

White to play. This position is from the game Piotrowski — Tannenberg, Germany, 1926. Nimzowitsch, the great German teacher, wrote of the passed pawn's lust to expand. How did White now satisfy this craving with his pawn on g6?



Solving on page 50

BASKETBALL

Brown gets back in swim for Towers

By NICHOLAS HARLING

THE stubborn determination of Karl Brown, the England international, not to get left behind as London Towers embarked on their demanding European Cup programme has led to him making an astonishing comeback from injury.

It was with his right foot in a plaster cast that the Brown, the 6ft 11in playmaker, painstakingly practised his shots after a swimming pool escape in Italy during the summer left him with a broken ankle.

Almost two months ahead of schedule, Brown, 29, returned for the Towers, the Budweiser League champions, on Sunday, scoring 20 points, including two three-pointers, in their 122-80 victory over Hemel and Watford Royals. A similar contribution would not go amiss at Wembley tonight when the Towers play their first home fixture in group H of the European competition, against PTT Ankara.

For three or four hours a day, Brown trained in the Spectrum Centre, Guildford, on a court that he had come to know well during his days with Guildford Kings. "I was down there in the gym, shooting on one leg with the physio doing the rebounding for me," he said. "If I wasn't doing that, I was working out and exercising on the weight machines. My fitness is still a little rusty and the ankle is still not 100 per cent, but it's nice to have got this first game under my belt."

Brown completed the final stages of his recuperation last week while the Towers were away beating Vita Tiblisi to make up for an earlier defeat in Verona.

Kevin Cadie, the Towers coach, was the most impressed observer of Brown's return. "It was a perfect type of game for him as it didn't go to the wire," he said. "Karl's been working hard, it's not as if he's been sitting around feeling sorry for himself."

However, Cadie is aware that Ankara will be a tougher proposition at Wembley than Hemel, the Budweiser's League bottom team.

AMERICAN FOOTBALL: QUARTERBACK REINFORCES PACKERS' SUPER BOWL CREDENTIALS

Favre passes test of character in style

By OLIVER HOLT

THEY stopped talking about the National Football League (NFL) pretenders yesterday and started up on a new chorus of praise for the thoroughbreds. Green Bay Packers got their bad game out of their system against Minnesota Vikings nine days ago, but on Sunday, the Packers, the team that is emerging as the class of this season's field, returned to form with a vengeance.

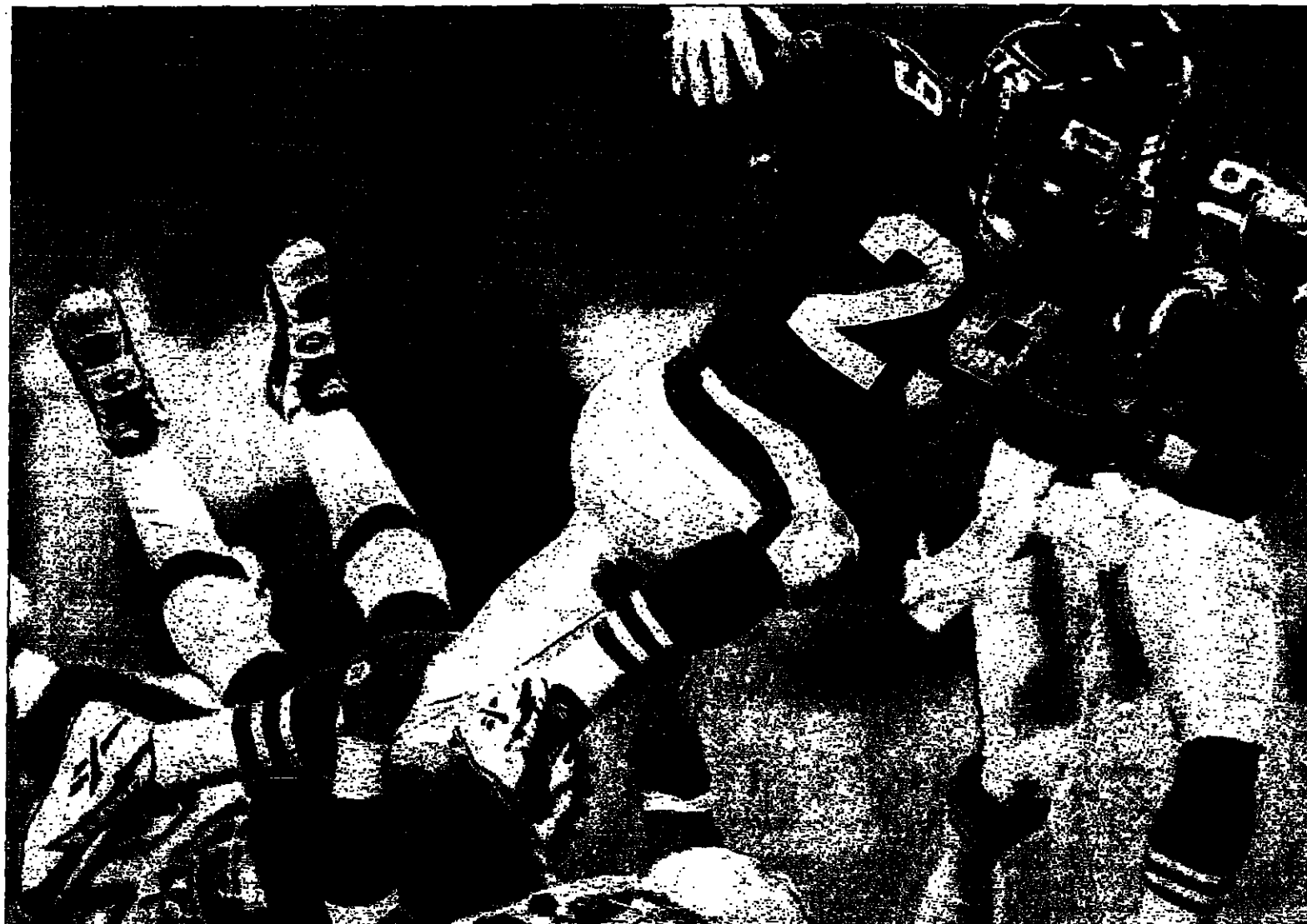
The Vikings, Kansas City Chiefs and Carolina Panthers, the three teams who took unbeaten records into the fifth weekend of the NFL season, all lost. Indianapolis Colts, the only remaining side with an unblemished record, did not play and, in their absence, the Packers grabbed the chance to re-establish their Super Bowl credentials.

Part of their appeal, part of the reason that the country seems to have been so enthused by their success, is that they are a team full of characters, from Reggie White, a preacher who used to be a member of Philadelphia Eagles' "body bag" defence, to Brett Favre, the brilliant quarterback who has been dogged by an addiction to painkillers.

Favre's problems, which have been well documented since he admitted, four months ago, that he was hooked on Vicodin and was subsequently forced to enter a rehabilitation clinic, seem to have subsided, but, despite his throwing, he is still coming under intense scrutiny.

He threw four touchdown passes in Seattle on Sunday as he led the Packers to a 31-10 rout of the Seahawks and leads the league with 16 touchdowns passes this season. If he continues at his present rate, he will exceed the record quarterback rating — the mark of a player's excellence — set by Steve Young, of San Francisco 49ers.

Favre, though, has still not been accorded the respect that he feels he deserves and the controversy about his painkiller addiction has only exacerbated the resentment welling up within him. He said that he would never have admitted his addiction if he had known that the NFL was going to force him into a programme that prevented him from touching alcohol for two years, even though he insists that he has never been an alcoholic.



Adrian Murrell, the Jets running back, scores a touchdown during their 24-16 defeat by Washington Redskins. Photograph: Ted Mathias

"When I threw 24 interceptions in 1993," he said, "people said they knew the Packers had made a mistake getting me. Then I came back better the next year and they said I had good talent around me and that was why I was doing well. Now they are saying no wonder I played well last year because I was taking pills. There has never been a time when people said: 'You know, he's just pretty damn good.'"

"I don't take the Vicodin any more. I take something called Motrin, which is an anti-inflammatory. While you're taking it, you're thinking, 'I'm hurting, this stuff's not working.' Then you get off it and you think: 'I guess it was working because I'm really hurting now.'"

Favre, who suffers from chronic lower back pain and nagging injuries to his left

knee and ankle, has also been under extra strain because of incidents involving his siblings. His younger sister, Brandi, a former Miss Teen Mississippi, was charged with being an accessory to a drive-by shooting; his older brother,

Scott, was arrested over a drink-driving charge. None of it, however, seems to have adversely affected Favre.

As the Packers were hoisting their record up to four wins out of five, the early pace-setters were getting reined in.

The Vikings looked set to complete another fourth-quarter comeback against New York Giants before Warren Moon, their quarterback, threw an interception that ruined their chances. "I tell you," Moon said somewhat

pessimistically after the 15-10 loss, "this is reality."

The Chiefs also came close to elevating themselves to a 5-0 record in San Diego, but were undone by the heroics of Junior Seau, the Chargers linebacker, who inspired the critical late block of a field goal attempt that gave the Chargers their 22-19 victory. In Jacksonville, the Jaguars won the battle of last year's two expansion teams to rob the Panthers of their unbeaten record with a 24-14 defeat.

New Orleans Saints continued in vain to search for a first victory, losing 17-10 to Baltimore Ravens, while the league's highest-profile hard-luck story, New York Jets' winless start, took a new twist when they had a touchdown disallowed during their 24-16 defeat at the hands of Washington Redskins.

ICE HOCKEY

Undeclared Eagles subdue the Storm

By NORMAN DE MESQUITA

AYR Scottish Eagles, the only unbeaten Superleague team, maintained their record with a 4-2 away win over Manchester Storm in the first leg of their Benson and Hedges Cup quarter-final.

The Storm were handicapped once again by the absence of two defencemen — Stephen Cooper, who has had a hernia operation, and Dale Jago, who has a knee ligament injury. Both will be out for a month or more. They had John Finnie, their goaltender, to thank for restricting Ayr to four goals. He saved 48 of the 52 shots that came his way.

Sam Groleau and Vince Boe gave the Eagles an early two-goal lead and, although Brad Rubachuk pulled one back for the Storm, Ayr were never really hard pressed.

Results were much as expected in the other three quarter-finals, but they were not achieved in quite the way one might have anticipated. Cardiff Devils beat Nottingham Panthers 1-0 in the lowest scoring game in British ice hockey since 1953. Steve Moria scored the decisive goal midway through the second period.

Previous form suggested that Basingstoke Bison would beat Bracknell Bees, their near neighbours, with ease, but their 5-3 win was far from straightforward. The Bees showed far more desire and led three times before a defensive error by Matt Côté allowed Chris Maybury to put the Bison 4-3 ahead with 12 minutes to go. They added a late power-play goal.

Sheffield Steelers, who lost a league game to Newcastle Cobras last weekend, gained ample consolation with a 6-3 success. The scores were level at 3-3 early in the final period when Jamie Leach took over. He scored twice, in eight minutes, to put the Steelers ahead and Nicky Chinn completed the scoring in the final two minutes.

Leach, who was with Pittsburgh Penguins when they won the Stanley Cup in 1992, has now scored 15 goals and had seven assists in ten league and cup games.

BASEBALL: FIRST SERIES REPEAT FOR 18 YEARS LOOKS DISTINCT POSSIBILITY

Braves feared by all in play-offs

By KEITH BLACKMORE

THE first full baseball season since 1993 enters its decisive phase today when the divisional play-offs begin. Eight teams are left to scrap for places in the World Series, the sport's annual showpiece, but the chances are that the same two teams as last season will be in at the death.

Atlanta Braves beat Cleveland Indians in six games last October and both are favoured to repeat their success as champions, respectively, of the National and American Leagues this year. If they do,

As luck would have it, the Yankees and the Dodgers are in the shake-up this time too. The Yankees, the Manchester United of the sport, won their American League division for the first time since 1981 and the Dodgers overcame the mid-season retirement of Tommy Lasorda, their fabled manager. The Dodgers, though, are limping into the post-season. On Friday they held a two-game lead in the National League West, with three games to play — all at home but all against San Diego Padres, their nearest rivals.

They lost the lot, the last two in extra innings. The hero for the Padres was Chris Gwynn, previously known only for being the brother of Tony, San Diego's hitting star, who won the individual batting championship on the same night. Chris Gwynn's two-run double in the eleventh inning gave his team the game and the West championship, steering them clear of Atlanta, the team that everyone wanted to avoid in the play-offs.

"Today I'm Chris Gwynn's brother," Tony said as his team-mates celebrated. "It means more to me that Chris

got the base hit than me winning the batting title." His delight was Mike Piazza's sorrow. The big Dodgers catcher lost the batting title on a technicality as his team lost the divisional championship.

For Texas Rangers, the Yankees' opponents, the play-offs represent unknown territory. The team, which began as Washington Senators in 1961, and moved to Arlington, Texas, in 1972, had never won so much as a divisional play-off.

The other American League play-off pits Cleveland, who were the most successful team in baseball this year, against

Baltimore Orioles, for whom seven players hit 20 or more home runs during the season. Like the Dodgers, the Orioles qualified for the play-offs thanks to a wild-card given to the best runners-up.

The Padres, meanwhile, must play St Louis Cardinals, who have flourished under the management of Tony La Russa, who guided Oakland Athletics to three consecutive Series in the Eighties. In his first season, La Russa has led his new team to the National League Central crown and their first play-off for almost a decade.

FINAL TABLES

AMERICAN LEAGUE: Boston 6 New York 5, Toronto 4 Baltimore 1, Milwaukee 7 Detroit 5 (in 10 innings); Minnesota 5 Chicago 4 (in 10 innings); Kansas City 1 Cleveland 1, Texas 4 California 3, Oakland 3 Seattle 1.				
East division				
1 New York	92	70	58	—
2 Baltimore	86	74	54	4
Boston	85	77	52	7
Toronto	74	88	47	18
Detroit	53	108	32	38
Central division				
1 Cleveland	89	62	61	—
Chicago	86	77	52	14
Minnesota	80	82	49	18
Minnesota	78	84	48	21
Kansas City	75	86	46	24
West division				
1 Texas	87	72	56	—
Seattle	86	76	53	4
Oakland	78	84	48	12
California	70	91	43	19

† denotes division title

* denotes wild card

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CHANGING TIMES

INSURANCES COMPANIES ACT 1982
LEGAL & GENERAL INSURANCE LIMITED
TRANSFER OF GENERAL BUSINESS

1. NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that Legal & General Insurance Limited applied to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on 1 October 1996 for his approval, pursuant to schedule 2C of the Insurance Companies Act 1982, to transfer to Guardian Insurance Limited all of its rights and obligations under commercial lines policies written by it in the United Kingdom prior to 1 October 1996.

2. Copies of the Statement of Particulars of the proposed transfer are available for inspection at the office of Legal & General Insurance Limited, 3 Finsbury Square, London EC2 1LL from Monday to Friday, between 9.00am to 5.00pm, where particulars may be inspected until 7 November 1996.

3. Written representations concerning the transfer may be sent to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, Department of Trade and Industry, Insurance Directorate, 1 Victoria Street, London SW1H 0ET before 7 December 1996.

The Secretary of State will not determine the application until after considering any representations made to him before that date.



Mike Piazza, of the Dodgers, tags out Doug Dascenzo, of the Padres. San Diego won 2-0 to lift the West title

Tracey Capstick on an emotional parting from her sailor husband

Navigating tears for a love of the cruel sea

On Sunday, after years of preparation, weeks of violent mood swings and days of fighting back the tears, I said goodbye to my husband, Jim, as he left Southampton aboard the yacht, *Ocean Rover*, to take part in the BT Global Challenge.

Needless to say, it was an emotionally-charged moment. I was not alone. There were many of us, both volunteers and their friends and family, experiencing the same agonising moment. I should like to say it was a joyous occasion, but for the most part it was not.

The weather proved appropriate — dark, windy and raining. I stood above the yacht and observed the behaviour of the participants in this bizarre ritual of farewells.

There were two noticeable camps of people. First, the skippers, the professionals who were confident, enthusiastic and impressive while the sponsors were businesslike and dutiful. Second, the amateurs — the crews and their supporters. Many of the crews were subdued, avoiding close interaction with each other and only occasionally acknowledging the presence of their nearest and dearest. Some were animated, all were apprehensive. My husband hid at the far side of the yacht. I was not surprised. He was going riddled with guilt at leaving two children, of ten and seven, and a wife who is eight months pregnant. We did not discuss it, but I knew it was there. Partners, parents, children and friends — fearful, frightened. In my particular case, constantly fighting the urge to scream out: "Please don't do this, we need you here."

Chay Blyth, the race director, attended each yacht and shook the skipper by the hand. He and I were



'It occurred to me his action was selfish and arrogant'

had left behind dependants who love them dearly and who rely on them either financially, or emotionally, or both. It occurred to me that the action of these brave volunteers, including that of my husband, was selfish and arrogant. They had chosen to place themselves in danger to satisfy their own needs over the interests of those they purport to love and each of them will return and assume that they will still be cherished ten months later by those left behind. I am sure there are many commendable reasons why families are torn apart. I am not convinced of the validity of this one.

At 9am I left to drive the 50 miles home to my children. We were due to attend a beach party at Stokes Bay, but it was cancelled because of the fierce winds and rain. Already Jim was in a Force 9 gale. As I got closer to home, panic set in. I was under considerable pressure to pull myself together before I reached the children.

Both Jim and I had gone to some lengths to present their father's journey in a positive light. Now it was my responsibility to follow it through and I did not want to blow it at the last hurdle. I rehearsed a



Tracey Capstick is bitter over the disruption caused to her family by the BT Global Challenge

speech to get them through the day and ensure that it did not unfold into a great emotional drama. Consequently it did not, and we did OK. My husband is proud to say I am a supportive wife and, despite all of the above, most of the time I am. I have always believed that Jim must live his own life. At the outset, he asked if he could participate in the Challenge and I consented. I know of many partners who have neither consented nor been asked.

Ironically, it is my fault that Jim is a volunteer. I suggested the original format of his winning entry in *The*

Times competition. I edited it and it was me who drove a round trip of 150 miles to meet the deadline. Then, when he took part in the final selection weekend, it was I who spent hours briefing him on how to behave and what qualities the organisers would look for. I do not know if I would do the same again. My advice to anyone contemplating the next one is — do not underestimate the pain.

Far from home — life aboard *Ocean Rover*

For failure, say gottle

Woodentops. Radio 2, 9.00pm.

As always, the Greeks had a word for it. So did the Romans. In both cases, "bellyspeck" came into it. Romans and Greeks were wrong. Ventriloquism involves only the tongue and the throat, and for those who have not mastered the closed-lips technique, "bottle of beer" comes out as "gottle of beer". Ray Alan's history of ventriloquism is the story of men — and a few women — who have made their living by talking to themselves in public. The monocular toff, Lord Charles, by talking to himself like a toper, shares the linking with his flesh-and-blood manipulator, Alan. This was a wise choice; they make up a well-above-average double-act. It is paradoxical that ventriloquism, a visual art if ever there was one, owes its resurgence to radio, which draws its strength from sound.

Reputations: Nikolaus Pevsner. Radio 3, 9.30pm.

It is right and proper that the recorded voice and architectural judgments of Nikolaus Pevsner should be part of the 50th birthday celebrations of the Third Programme. His broadcasts were many and significant. He was an authority on the Englishness of English art — strange for a refugee from Germany. He achieved fame with his *Buildings of England* and *Pioneers of the Modern Movement*. Joe Mordaunt Cook's reappraisal of Pevsner's reputation is enriched by the contributions of eminent contemporary commentators, including Gavin Stamp and John Harris.

Peter Davall

RADIO 1

FM Stereo, 6.30am Chris Evans 9.00 Simon Mayo 12.00 Chris Jordan, Inci at 12.30pm-12.45 Newsbeat 2.00 Nick Camp 4.00 Mark Goodier 7.00 Evening Session 9.00 Cling Film 10.00 Mark Radcliffe 12.00 Claire Sturgess 4.00am Claire Warren

RADIO 2

FM Stereo, 6.00am Sarah Kennedy 7.30 Wake Up to Work 8.30 Ken Bruce 11.30 Alex Lester 1.30pm Debbie Thewer 3.00 Ed Stewart 5.05 John Dunn 7.00 Hayes Over Britain 8.30 The Elephant Men (8.50) 9.00 Woodentops. See Choice 10.00 The Season's Stars. A new series in which George Cole takes as the season of Highgate Cemetery (10) 10.30 The Jamisons 12.05am Charles Nove 3.00 Steve Madden

RADIO 5 LIVE

5.00am Morning Reports, Inci 5.45 Wake Up to Money 6.00 The Breakfast Programme Inci at 6.55, 7.55 racing review 8.35 The Magazine, with Brian Hayes, Inci 10.35 News from Europe 12.00 Midday with Blair, Inci 12.35pm Moneycheck 2.05 Fussco on Five, Inci 2.55 The News, with Brian Hayes, Inci 3.45 Entertainment News 4.00 Nationwide, Inci at 5.45 Entertainment News 7.00 News Extra, Inci at 7.20 Sports Bulletin 7.25 The Tuesday Match, with Mark Pougatch. Coverage of the first division clash between Ipswich and Barnsley 10.05 News Talk, with Nigel Cassidy 11.00 Night News 12.05am After Hours 2.05 Up All Night, with Rhod Sharp

TALK RADIO

5.00am Early Breakfast 7.00 Paul Ross 9.00 Scott Chisholm 12.00 Anna Pearson 2.00pm Tommy Boyd 4.00pm Onetime, with Peter Dinklage 7.00 Muz Day's Sportszone 10.00 James White 1.00am Ian Collins

RADIO 3

6.00am On Air, with Andrew McGregor. Bach (Concerto in D minor for two violins, BWV1043); Beethoven (String Quartet in A, Op 18 No 5); Schubert (Piano Trio in D minor, Op 99 No 2); Rossini (Overture, The Silken Ladder); Gould (Lullaby, American Synchroette) 9.00 Morning Collection, with Catriona Young, Wagner (A Faust Overture); Britten (Ode to St Cecilia); Lladro (Dancers); Mozart (The Sun, the Great Luminary of the Universe); London Symphony Artist of the Week: David Atherton. Britten (Songs and Proverbs of William Blake); Purcell (O sing unto the Lord, 244) 12.00 Composer of the Week: Steve Reich at 60 with music for maracas, voice and organs 1.00pm News; The BBC Orchestra (Gerhard Schuster). The BBC Symphony under its guest and principal conductor, Matthias Bamert and Andrew Davis 2.00 Antonio Soler. Concerto in A for two organs: Tina Mathot and Ton Koopman 3.25 The BBC Orchestra. The BBC National Orchestra of Wales under Tadaaki Otaka and Paul Watkins, cello. Brahms (Variations on a Theme by Haydn); Tchaikovsky (Rococo Variations, original version); Brahms (Symphony No 1 in C minor)

RADIO 4

5.55am Shipping Forecast (LW only) 6.00 News Briefing Inci Weather 6.10 Farming Today 6.30 Prayer for the Day 6.30 Today Inci 7.25, 8.25 Sports News 7.45 Thought for the Day 8.40 A Moment's Liberty (25) 8.50 Weather 9.00 News 9.05 Call Nick Ross 0171-580 4444 10.00 News; Fritz Spiegler's Suburb (PM). The writer and musician Fritz Spiegler takes a turn around Toddlers; Liverpool 10.00 Daily Service (LW) 10.15 On This Day (LW) 10.30 Woman's Hour 11.30 All in the Mind. Are citizens' juries an appropriate forum for discussing mental health policies? Presented by Professor Anthony Clare 12.00 News; You and Yours, with Lesley Hiddich 12.25pm Hooted A new series of the story-telling game. With Tim Brooke-Taylor, Roy Cooney, Graeme Garden and Adrian Walsh 12.55 Weather 1.00 The World at One. With Charlie Lee-Potter at the Labour Party Conference in Blackpool and Chris Lowe in London 1.40 The Archers (1) 1.55 Shipping Forecast 2.00 News; Books and Company with John Walsh (1) 2.30 Compelling Notes with Brian Kay. In the first of a new series, Brian Kay talks to the tenor Ian Partridge and his pianist sister, Jennifer 3.00 The Afternoon News 4.00 News 4.05 Kaleidoscope. Paul Vaughan talks to the Booker Prize judges as the shortlist of candidates is announced

UXORLOCAL

(b) Living with one's wife's family. From the Latin *uxor* a wife + *locus* a place. A suitable blessing for brides would be: "May your husband be ever *uxorious* (wife-loving) and never *uxorilocal*."

SOLUTION TO WINNING CHESS MOVE

1. Qh8+ Kxh8; 2. g7+ Kg8; 3. Bh7+ Kxh7; 4. g8Q mate.

BOXING

McCracken has title task

ROBERT MCCracken will step into a boxing ring at Aston Villa Leisure Centre tonight, but he would much rather be somewhere else (Srikumar Sen writes).

He must defend his

Commonwealth middle-weight championship against Fitzgerald Brune, of Canada, who is the last man that McCracken wants to meet — not because McCracken is afraid of him, but because

Brune is the most frustrating of opponents.

This is their second meeting. In their bout last November, at Dudley, Brune proved to be so awkward to hit that McCracken did not impress many ringsiders. Roy Francis, the referee, gave the bout to McCracken by a clear margin of eight rounds to three, but so strong was the opinion of others that Brune had won by a similar margin that the Commonwealth committee had to order a rematch.

It is unfortunate that, just as McCracken is on the point of signing for a title bout with Lonnie Bradley, the World Boxing Organisation champion, he has to take on such a slippery opponent. Indeed, according to McCracken: "He's not just awkward, he's horrible. He's tall, a southpaw and he hasn't a clue. He panics whenever you come near him. I don't take any pleasure out of fighting the guy. I just want it over with."

With luck, McCracken could find Brune less resilient this time. Whereas McCracken has had two bouts since meeting Brune and won them both well to take his record to 17 wins without a loss, Brune has boxed just once, losing to Greg Wright, of Detroit. It was his fifth defeat in six outings.

Billington earns late reward for Olympic achievements

By Jenny MacArthur

GEOFF BILLINGTON, who was sixth in the Olympic showjumping competition and the best British equestrian performer in Atlanta, was named *Horse and Hound* personality of the year at the Animal Health Trust's United Kingdom equestrian awards in London yesterday.

The awards, which were presented by the Princess Royal, the president of the Animal Health Trust, were started seven years ago "to recognise outstanding scientific, sporting and welfare achievements in the equine world".

Billington, a jovial, wisecracking Lancastrian who was making his British team debut in Atlanta — at the age of 41 — had considered himself to be the weak link in the team. "I just hoped I wouldn't let the others down," he said, referring to his three more experienced team members, Nick Skelton and the brothers John and Michael Whitaker.

He produced two superb rounds in the individual contest on Gerard Lever's ten-year-old *It's Otto*, which qualified him for the six-horse jump-off for silver and bronze medals. The Dutch-bred

horse, the winner of the Daphur top horse award yesterday, looked set for a clear round against the clock but one mistake at a gate kept him in sixth place.

"He's a superstar — I'm just lucky that late in life I have found myself with one of the best horses in the world," Billington said after receiving his award. He will be partnering *It's Otto* at the Bremen International Show in Germany this weekend.

Walter Swinburn, the jock-



Billington: jovial

EQUESTRIANISM

POOLS FORECAST

Saturday October 5		THIRD DIVISION		SCOTTISH FIRST	
Coupon No.	18	Barnet v Torquay	1	36 Ards v St Mirren	1
1	19	Cambridge v Hartlepool	1	37 Dundee v Clydebank	1
2	20	Cardiff v Mansfield	1	38 E Fife v Falkirk	2
3	21	Chesham v Cardiff	X	39 E Morton v Partick	1
4	22	Darlington v Rochdale	2	SCOTTISH SECOND	
5	23	Doncaster v Leyton Q 2	2	40 Brechin v Brechin	X
6	24	Harrogate v Scarborough	2	41 Dumbarton v Ayr	2
7	25	Hull v Southport	1	42 Livingston v Albion	1
8	26	Lincoln v Exeter	1	43 Stirling v Clyde	1
9	27	Northampton v Fulham	2	44 Stranraer v Q of South	1
10	28	Wigan v Brighton	1	SCOTTISH THIRD	
VALUABLE		45 Albion v Montrose		46 E Skirling v Ross	
7		29 Huddersfield v Rotherham		47 Forfar v Cowden	
8		30 Northwich v Dover		48 Inverness v Aberdeen	
9		31 Rushden v Welling		49 Queens Park v Alloa	
10		32 Slough v Morecambe		X	
11		33 Stevenage v Southport		X	
12		34 Swadlow Moor v Walsby		X	
13		35 Woking v Macclesfield		X	
14		36 Woking v Macclesfield		X	
15		37 Woking v Macclesfield		X	
16		38 Woking v Macclesfield		X	
17		39 Woking v Macclesfield		X	

DRAWN (home team): Bradford City, Charlton Athletic, Ipswich Town, Plymouth Argyle, York City, Chester City, Northwich Victoria, Woking, Brechin City, Albion Rovers.

BEST DRAWS: Charlton, Ipswich, York, Northwich, Woking.

AWAYS: Blackpool, Bristol City, Scarborough, Kettering, Falkirk.

HOME: Brentford, Gillingham, Preston North End, Wycombe Wanderers, Carlisle United, Hull City, Lincoln City, Slough, Aldershot, Livingston.

FIXED ODDS: Home: Gillingham, Preston, Wycombe, Hull, Lincoln, Ayr, Blackpool, Bristol City, Kettering, Draw: Charlton, Ipswich, York.

X Vince Wright



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فكرنا من الأصل

Woman as wolf, not as strange as it sounds

The revelation of the fatal secret is a device well known to dramatists through the ages. You might say that, with *Oedipus*, it is the mummy of them all. It made a decent bit out of it and not too long ago Woody Allen wrote that sketch (*Lowbrow's Women Considered*) about a man whose family finally tell him the terrible truth about his mother. "What's going on?" he asks, "What's going on?" they ask, their eyes swivelling. "What's going on?" Mean-while the bats fluttering around the head of teenage Joe similarly signal dementia only to those with eyes to see. "Cup of tea, Joe?" people ask. "It's the drink of the devil," replies Joe, wagging a finger, madly, and turning lightly on his heel. At which they shrug and say, "OK son, coffee it is".

The plight of the poor wolf-lady in *Wilderness* (ITV) is similar. While no other character in this new three-part drama is likely to believe that she turns into a wolf once a month, the viewer takes the information on board with surprising ease. Woman-wolf: wolf-woman? No problem with that and it helps that Ben Bolt directs

this potential, rug-chewer with plucky seriousness. Amanda Ooms (academic librarian at London University with innocent name, Alice White) is very beautiful and mysterious, and does a lot of acting with her eyes; but the main thing is that fox-like men sniff around her and she rips their throats out. Fortunately, she has now hooked up with an animal behaviour specialist (Owen Teale), so the future holds promise. It's just a shame it's a monthly wolf, because it's always a monthly wolf. Someone who turned into a squirrel once a fortnight would be real headline news.

Channel 4's *Cutting Edge* last night was *The Test*, and for a while it threatened to be rather dull — certainly by comparison with the flying fur on the other channel. Two hopeful learner drivers, two hopeful trainee examiners — all filmed

inside their cars, their fear of failure so self-evident that you didn't need to be a wolf-lady to smell it. But such high emotion in such a banal context made the film charming. "Next road on the right please," the examiners practised saying, in mirrors. It's surprising how many ways you can say the words, "Would you read and sign this insurance declaration?" and still sound unconvincing.



Lynne Truss

Unbilled star of the show was, of course, a hopeless woman driver who had taken a driving test 40 times in 20 years. Mrs Howard was a short, irrepressible Jewish woman whose scabbed sawed her neck, and whose driving instructor (Mr Victor) had sat beside her for 20 years with his head growing old in his hand. With Mrs Howard at the wheel, he looked frail and pained, like someone with toothache all over his body. She stalled whenever she reversed. "You won't set the gas!" he told her, for the umpteenth time. They bickered like an old-time music-hall act. "Did you drink something before coming out Victor?" "Yeah."

Who would fail the test, ultimately? Only Mrs Howard, of course. Her teenage son tested her on the Highway Code. "Where can you overtake?" he asked, gently. "What do you mean?" she snapped. "That's a very awkward

question! I hope they won't ask me such a question!" It was hilarious. In the event, her examiner failed her on the emergency stop — a highly alarming sexual of tyres. But when he started to explain, she told him to shut up. She removed her glasses and wiped her eyes on her jumper. "It's not fair," she complained after. "He didn't give me a second chance."

Normally I would complain at the way a person had been ill-treated by television, but since I've made no dent in that particular brick wall and my head hurts, it may be time to give in. Besides, as one of those people who talks but never listens, Mrs Howard may have been warned a hundred times about the dangers of appearing in this programme. I liked the way the first-time examiner gave her another test-application form at the end, incidentally. He pretend-

ed everything was absolutely normal, but all the way through the test, he must have wondered: is this really for a Channel 4 documentary, or is it an elaborate set-up for Jeremy Beadle?

Back at *EastEnders* (if I may) I would like to share an observation. "You still here?" said Ian last night, to which Cindy replied, "Where else would I be?" The habit of answering questions with questions has a fine tradition in *EastEnders* (it automatically ups the ante) but last night I saw one of the longest exchanges I have ever heard. "How long are you gonna keep this up, Ian?" "What?" "When are we going to get things back to the way they were?" "How can we?" "So I've come back to you for what? For you to punish me?" "When they do this on *Whose Line Is It Anyway?* they fatter and giggle long before they get that far."

Matthew Bond is away

6.00am Business Breakfast (26642)
7.00am BBC Breakfast News (59913)
8.00am Breakfast News Extra (CeeFax) (5879536)
9.20am Style Challenge (s) (264371) 9.45 Kilroy (s) (2594352) 10.30am Can't Cook, Won't Cook (s) (61915)
11.00am News and weather (6178371)
11.05am Conference Live: 12.00pm coverage of the Labour Party conference from Blackpool. Featuring Tony Blair's address. Includes news at 12.00 (59827826)

1.00pm News and weather (29772) 1.30 Regional News (5720975)
1.40pm Neighbours (CeeFax) (s) (44897197) 2.00pm Call My Bluff (s) (6410517) 2.30pm Turnabout (s) (6174438) 3.00pm The Terrace (s) (8371) 3.30pm Boom (s) (59829152)
3.40pm Roundabout the Reindeer (s) (93043468) 3.50pm The All New Popeye Show (CeeFax) (s) (44687197) 4.10pm Oscar's Orchestra (CeeFax) (s) (6410517) 4.35pm The Queen's Nose (s) (CeeFax) (s) (6174438) 5.00pm Newsround (CeeFax) (7378033) 5.10pm Byker Grove (CeeFax) (s) (290764)

5.35pm Neighbours (s) (CeeFax) (s) (409408) 6.00pm News and weather (CeeFax) (10) 6.30pm Regional News (82)
7.00pm Holiday. Jill Dando checks out an all-inclusive holiday to Cyprus; Kevin Woodford tries a cruise-and-stay deal that takes in Orlando and a trip to the Bahamas; Sandra Guba stays in a chambre d'hôte in France; Plus: Diana Madill goes for a weekend stay at the home of Lord and Lady Mountbatten (CeeFax) (s) (4492)
7.30pm EastEnders. Cindy, feeling like a prisoner, appeals to David to provide an escape route. (CeeFax) (s) (449)

8.00pm 999 Lifesavers. Michael Buerk and Juliet Morris with a series of extraordinary true stories of bravery (CeeFax) (s) (6772)
8.30pm A Question of Sport. David Coleman poses the questions, with former world snooker champion, John Parrott and Rangers and Scotland striker Ally McColloch as the new captains. The guests are Michelle Smith, Dean Saunders, Colin Jackson and Martin Offiah (CeeFax) (s) (5807)
9.00pm Nine O'Clock News. Regional News and weather (CeeFax) (8246)
9.30pm After the Break. Patrick Kielty presents a compilation of adverts from around the world (CeeFax) (s) (35623)
10.00pm Crimewatch UK, with Nick Ross and Jill Dando (CeeFax) (s) (864791)
10.45pm Film: Dad (1989). Emotional drama as a successful Wall Street businessman is forced to look after his father when his mother is taken ill. As the two men grow closer the son reassesses his relationship with his own son. Sweet but not sickly. Jack Lemmon, Ted Danson and Olympia Dukakis. Directed by Gary David Goldberg (CeeFax) (s) Continued at 11.50pm (757062)

11.40pm Crimewatch UK Update (CeeFax) (519371)
11.50pm Dad continued and concluded (632739)
12.55am 10.00 Weather (8513111)

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6.00am Open University: Elements Organised — the Periodic Table (7796420)
6.25am Natural Navigators (7175565)
6.50am The Ocean Floor (9375352)
7.15pm See Hear Breakfast News (CeeFax) (635420) 7.30pm Aftin and the Chipmunks (89772) 7.55pm Blue Peter (s) (CeeFax) (s) (8078178) 8.20pm Fireman Sam (s) (1703284) 8.35pm Leslie (s) (8428352)
8.00pm Standard Grade Design (s) (5877178) 8.20pm The RE Collection (s) (7262913)
8.45pm Watch (s) (132772) 10.00pm Playdays (s) (10536) 10.30pm Come Outside (s) (1251536) 10.45pm Science Zone — Types of Material (s) (3905913) 11.05pm Space Ark (s) (6186536)
11.15pm Clementine (880401) 11.30pm GNVQ TV Special (s) (83159) 12.00pm Working Lunch (13401) 1.00pm Teaching Today (s) (50642) 1.30pm Showcase (s) (5762817)
1.40pm Hotch Potch House (s) (14020449)
2.10pm Conference Live (s) (431371)
3.55pm News and weather (CeeFax) (8611994)
4.00pm Today's the Day (s) (75) 4.30pm Ready, Steady, Cook (s) (59) 5.00pm The Oprah Winfrey Show (CeeFax) (9520420) 5.40pm A Week to Remember (b/w) (281159) 5.50pm Breast of Friends (118265)
6.00pm Heartbreak High (Telex) (834517)
6.45pm Conference Talk. A round-up of the day's events from Blackpool (s) (972536)
7.30pm The Chemistry of (Almost) Everything. Mike Bullivant reveals the complex relationship between bird droppings, drugs, diamonds, dynamite and power (Telex) (86)

8.00pm Pound for Pound. How to save thousands by changing mortgage lender and do private investors score by buying football club shares? (s) (7642)
8.30pm Antonio Carluccio's Italian Feast. Antonio meets a Parmesan cheese-maker (s) (3449)

9.00pm Timewatch: Stalin's Foreign Slaves. John Noble returns to Bucharest, which was his way to the Gulag (CeeFax) (s) (901975)
9.50pm Trade Secrets: Decorators. Professionals share tricks of their trade (CeeFax) (s) (550371)
10.00pm Hanoi: Competitions. How To Win money and influence People (s) (84855)
10.30pm Newsnight (CeeFax) (513797)
11.15pm Over the Edge (CeeFax) (s) (520888)
11.45pm Favourite Films. Clint Eastwood with clips from The Pale Face, The Searchers, and Unforgiven, which inspired his own spaghetti-Western debut, A Fistful of Dollars (s) (CeeFax) (529159)
12.15pm National Trust Gardens (s) (740395)
12.25pm The History Man (s) (8662734)
12.30pm 6.00 The Learning Zone

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SKY 2
7.00pm The Simpsons (1376951) 7.30pm Sea Rescue (823233) 8.00pm News (823233) 8.30pm Rumpelstiltskin (451773) 10.00pm New York Undercover (454263) 11.00pm Late Show, with David Letterman (165004) 12.00pm FLUX: Young Frankenstein (1271719) 2.00am Hi Me Long Play (354734)

SKY NEWS
Worldwide news coverage with bulletins on the hour, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

SKY MOVIES
6.00pm Pumping Iron II: The Women (1985) (30772) 6.30pm Kaledonides (1965) (40771) 10.00pm Free Willy (s) (71459) 12.00pm News Trump's (s) (71459) (1994) (30642) 2.00pm The Godfather (1982) (59884) 4.00pm Mother's Day on Wall Street (1992) (5710) 6.00pm The Untouchables (1960) (30771) 11.45pm Serial Mom (1994) (11177) 12.00pm Choices of the Heart: The Margaret Sanger Story (1984) (531034) 2.30pm Day of Reckoning (1984) (519765) 4.30pm 6.00 Kaledonides (1965) (112355)

THE MOVIE CHANNEL
6.00am Along Came Jones (1945) (7333) 7.30pm Willy Coy: 20,000 Leagues

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CHOICE
Timewatch: Stalin's Foreign Slaves BBC2, 9.00pm
We know that the Soviet Union's forced labour camps made virtual slaves of millions of its citizens. Less well known is that tens of thousands of foreigners were also victims of the gulag. Timewatch has tracked down some of the survivors. They provide further evidence, should it be needed, that among the worst perpetrators of 20th-century atrocities Stalin is up there with Hitler and Pol Pot. Former prisoners from Britain, France and the United States recall their arbitrary arrests, long sentences imposed without any pretence of a trial and years spent working themselves to exhaustion in dreadful conditions and on wretched diets. At least they are alive to tell their tales. Prisoners who protested were executed, others allowed to die from cold and hunger.

Witness: School Prayers Channel 4, 9.00pm
Canon Slade, a Church of England school in Bolton, Greater Manchester, is a victim of its own success. An outstanding academic record, and a reputation for imparting discipline and traditional moral values, has produced many more applicants than places. This has led the school to introduce a points system. To gain the points almost all pupils, children and their parents have to prove that they are regular churchgoers. Competition is so fierce that some less than Christian parents are said to cook the figures. Those who fall short of the required total can appeal and the film follows four families through the process. All plead special circumstances to explain their lack of church attendance. In a supposedly secular age, this determination to embrace the C of E may be surprising, not to say gratifying.

The Visit: Claudia's Story ITV, 10.40pm
Claudia McKibbin has Venter syndrome, a rare crippling illness. She has no guttural, her arms and forearms are deformed and she suffers from stomach complaints. At birth it was touch and go whether she would survive through. Doctors thought she should be left to die. Within hours of being born she had undergone two operations and has now had more than 20. But at 13 she is one of the syndrome's oldest survivors. Brave, positive and without a trace of self-pity she makes the ideal subject to round off Desmond Wilcox's rules of courage. At times she sounds almost through. Doctors thought she should be left to die. Within hours of being born she had undergone two operations and has now had more than 20. But at 13 she is one of the syndrome's oldest survivors. Brave, positive and without a trace of self-pity she makes the ideal subject to round off Desmond Wilcox's rules of courage. At times she sounds almost through. Doctors thought she should be left to die. 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AMERICAN FOOTBALL 47

Victory pulls Green
Bay clear of
chasing pack

SPORT

TUESDAY OCTOBER 1 1996

GOLF 49

Johnson sets course
record on way
to triumph in US



Dutchman could face legal action

Van Hooijdonk claims denied by angry Celtic

By Kevin McCarron

CELTIC publicly attacked one of their own players yesterday. Pierre van Hooijdonk was left out of the squad for the weekend defeat by Rangers after an argument with Tommy Burns, the manager.

Fergus McCann, the club's chief executive, has now denied Van Hooijdonk's version of events in a disagreement whose origins lie in a contractual dispute.

According to McCann, Van Hooijdonk, from Holland, has told Celtic that he wants a transfer unless his earnings are increased, even though 21 months of his present deal still remain. The club will give him such a rise only if he agrees to extend the contract. Burns also said that Van Hooijdonk had expressed an eagerness to move to Feyenoord at the end of last season.

He has also been accused of breaches of discipline that include failure to play in a testimonial match, to warm up for a game when instructed, and to take part in charitable and commercial engagements. "I don't want young players looking at that kind of behaviour and wondering how he gets away with it," Burns said.

Celtic have not ruled out the possibility of legal action against Van Hooijdonk for

breach of contract, but the possibility of reconciliation remains. "He must learn humility," Burns said. "I can have a stand-up fight with someone, but then we can put our hands together and go on."

The club is willing to sell the player if differences cannot be resolved, but there are few Dutch clubs who would be willing to meet the transfer fee of around £3 million that Celtic would seek. Burns observed that, even without the dispute, Van Hooijdonk would have been only a substitute at the Old Firm match.

Klinsmann cornered 48
Managers meet 48

While the player's position is uncertain, that of another man has been clarified. Alex Miller's association with Hibernian succumbed to exhaustion yesterday. After ten years at Easter Road, he resigned his post yesterday, having found that his position was untenable. An embarrassing 3-1 defeat at home by Heart of Midlothian, in the Edinburgh derby on Saturday, intensified the growing dissatisfaction with Miller.

While a majority of the board continued to support

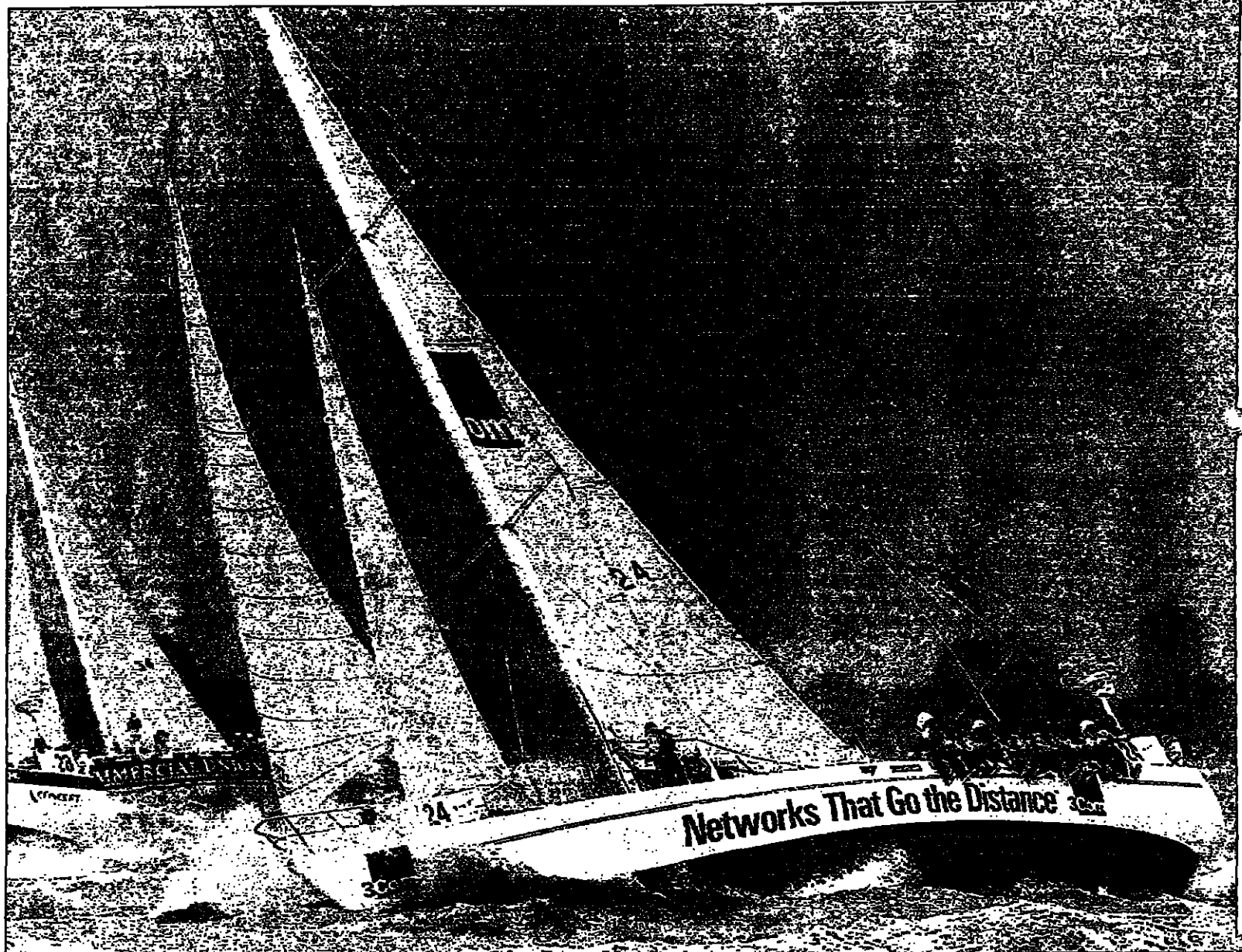
him, the division among directors may have been enough to prompt Miller's decision. He also works as assistant to Craig Brown, the Scotland manager, and it is thought that Hibernian would not have been prepared to let him spend a week away from his club job while with the national team at the forthcoming World Cup qualifiers in Latvia and Estonia.

Douglas Croom, the Hibernian chairman, had been the most fervent advocate of Miller and he praised the work of the manager, who ensured stability on the field during the period in which the club went into receivership before finding new owners in 1991. "Alex stuck by the club in the darkest days and even turned down jobs overseas when he didn't know what the future was," he said. "He rallied the players here."

Miller also won the Skol Cup in 1991 and the results alone do not suggest a crisis at present, since Hibernian are only a point away from third place in the Scottish League Premier division. Supporters, however, have wearied of Miller and bemoaned the drabness of his team. However, the manager's departure may expose deeper causes of the mediocrity.

Discussing Miller's successor, Croom said: "We have to find out who has got a contract and who has not." Clearly, the club is unwilling, or unable, to pay compensation to secure a manager successfully employed elsewhere. Anyone taking up the position may wonder if there will be sufficient funds available to transform the squad.

Ray Wilkins, on a month's contract with Hibernian as a player, is an obvious candidate for the post, but he has already indicated that he has no wish to live in Scotland. Hibernian may also consider Alex Smith, who recently resigned at Clyde, and Steve Archibald, a former player at Easter Road who was dismissed as East Fife's manager earlier this season.



3Com, skippered by David Tomkinson, sailed into troubled waters as soon as the nine-month BT Global Challenge got underway

Fax almost spoils story for Tomkinson

By Edward Gorman
SAILING CORRESPONDENT

A YACHT in the BT Global Challenge came within a whisker of being disqualified yesterday — less than 24 hours after the start of the nine-month race — after it received illegal weather routing information as it made its way down the Needles Channel.

The yacht, 3Com, skippered by David Tomkinson, was sent a long and detailed message via Portsmouth Radio, surveying all the options on which way to go out of the Solent, then how to tackle the English Channel and the all-important tactical decision on how to get past the Azores high-pressure system.

The information was compiled by Giles Trollope, who has been assisting Tomkinson and Warren Walker, his navigator, on routing, and the message amounted to his final thoughts before the start on Sunday. However, the infor-

mation reached a horrified Tomkinson about four hours after the gun, as 3Com was well on her way out into the English Channel.

The race organisers were immediately alerted by Tomkinson, who was terrified that two years of training plus the hard-earned backing of his sponsor, Concert — a British Telecom subsidiary in America — was all about to be wasted after just one night at sea.

Initially, Adrian Rayson, the Challenge race office manager, warned Trollope that what he called his "unsolicited" message to the 3Com had put its "race status in jeopardy and might lead to its disqualification for receiving outside assistance."

Chay Blyth, the race director, then stepped in and ordered that the message, originally intended for Tomkinson's eyes only, be transmitted to the entire fleet, to ensure that there was no

unfair advantage to 3Com. The problem arose because Portsmouth did not send the fax for several hours and the delay was further compounded because the radio officers also omitted to transmit a note at the top confirming that the information had been sent

BT
Global Challenge

Latest positions 48
Emotional farewell 50

before the start of the race and had not been amended since, in accordance with the rules.

Tomkinson appears to have been relieved, though whether any of his fellow skippers will raise the issue at a later

date remains to be seen. Under the race rules, the yachts are not allowed any information after the start apart from that which is conveyed to all of them from the race office, plus anything they pick up on their way round in the form of "all stations" broadcasts.

One of the skippers' biggest worries, and something that they tried to sort out before they left Southampton on Sunday, was what would happen if they inadvertently received information which could amount to illegal outside assistance. Nobody could have foreseen how quickly such a situation would arise.

Out on the course, meanwhile, the fleet endured an unpleasant first night at sea in the southwesterly gale. Yesterday the 14 yachts were spread over 33 miles on their way to Ushant, with the lead being disputed by Mike Golding, on Group 4, and Simon Walker, on Toshiba Wave Warrior,

who each had around 4,900 miles to go to Rio de Janeiro.

Many of the volunteer crews have been suffering from seasickness and, in some cases, wondering why they have paid to go through such uncomfortable conditions. A message to race headquarters from Group 4 summed it up — "After an emotional and exciting start to the race, most crew members are suffering from the effects of rough weather and many are seeing Saturday's dinner again."

"We're slowly settling into watch systems and duties on board, but everything seems to take twice as long as it should with breaks to take air and visit the heads."

"There was lots of groaning, overnight and bodies played on deck. Although there is not much chat, I think we are united in our thoughts — have we really got 30,000 miles to go and have we actually paid to do this?"

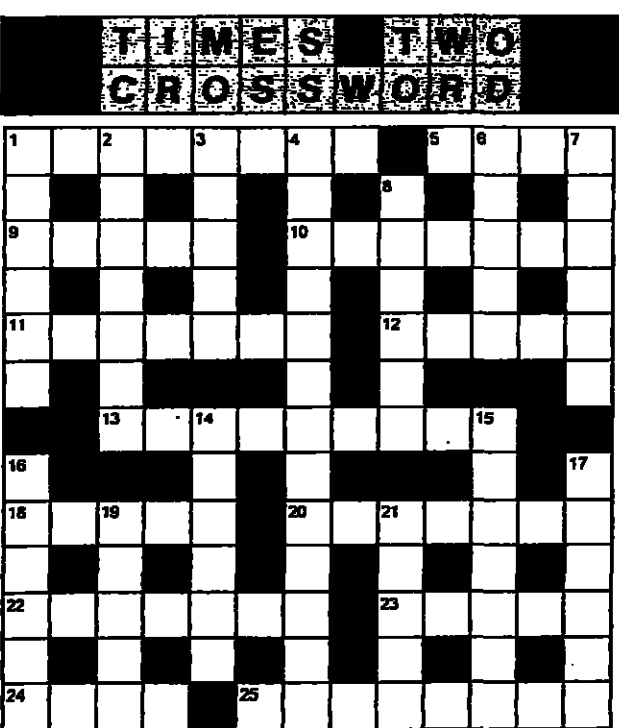
Souness signs striker

SOUTHAMPTON yesterday signed Egil Ostenstad, 24, the Norwegian striker, from Viking Stavanger for £900,000. He completed the deal after agreeing personal terms and passing a medical at The Dell.

Ostenstad has scored four goals in four internationals for Norway and 23 goals in 24 matches for his club.

Graeme Souness, the Southampton manager, said: "He is

a big strong lad with a great goalscoring record and could be just what we need up front." Souness will also finalise a £1.2 million move for Eyal Berkowitz, the Israeli midfielder player, from Maccabi Haifa when his work permit is confirmed. Southampton expect both to play in their next FA Carling Premiership match, away to Coventry City on Sunday week.



No 901

ACROSS

- 1 Fashionable, modern (2-2-4)
- 5 A pig; a security (4)
- 9 Eskimo canoe (5)
- 10 One-horned myth. beast (7)
- 11 Went in (7)
- 12 Herb, sounds like period (5)
- 13 Iniquitous (9)
- 18 Horrify (5)
- 20 Finished; by means of (7)
- 22 Wine-producing estate (7)
- 23 Conductor's stick (5)
- 24 Body of water; English District (4)
- 25 Shaven-skull hooligan (8)

DOWN

- 1 Maintenance (6)
- 2 Test authority limits (3-2-2)
- 3 Capital of Senegal (5)
- 4 Utterly astonished (13)
- 6 Mild sarcasm (5)
- 7 Underground passage (6)
- 8 Small restaurant (6)
- 14 Catcher of impurities (6)
- 15 Deliberately sink (ship) (7)
- 16 Wrapped package (6)
- 17 Rang up (6)
- 19 Length of cut wood (5)
- 21 Garden songbird (5)

SOLUTION TO NO 900

ACROSS: 1 Public 4 Verbal 8 Crew 9 Mor justie 10 First Lady 13 Mummy 15 Adore 16 Mated 18 Irritable 21 Terrific 22 Gang 23 Cogent 24 Rejoice
DOWN: 1 Pacify 2 Bestroot 3 Camel 5 Employment 6 Busk 7 Leeway 11 Tradition 12 Amour 14 Membrane 16 Mystic 17 Weight 19 Incur 20 Frog

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£5m Cole bid kept on back burner

By David Maddock

ANDY COLE, a footballing outcast with Manchester United despite a transfer fee that, at £7 million, was a British record, will be denied, at least temporarily, the opportunity to resurrect his career with Everton.

Joe Royle, the Everton manager, is determined to bring a new forward to Goodison Park before the team plays again, in ten days' time, after long-term injuries to his striking partnership of Duncan Ferguson and Paul Rideout.

Cole is his primary target and Everton have returned to Old Trafford with the suggestion of an improved offer after failing with a £4.5 million bid for the player during the summer, when it appeared that Alan Shearer was Manchester-bound.

Cole, however, will not be allowed to move until the Christmas period at the earliest, even though he has clearly fallen behind Ole Gunnar Solskjaer in the pecking order of forwards at the club.

It is now accepted at boardroom level that United will ultimately be forced to sell Cole in an attempt to cut their losses after his failure to secure a regular first-team place. Alex Ferguson, the manager,

has decided, however, that he cannot sell the player while United are still engaged in the European Cup Champions' League. Cole is his only realistic cover for Solskjaer, signed during the summer from Molde, of Norway.

Ferguson admitted yesterday that Solskjaer was now firmly ahead of Cole in



Cole: Everton target

his thinking. "How can you ignore Ole's goals," he said. "He picks himself scoring that way."

His dilemma is that any new signing to replace Cole will be eligible only for the quarter-finals of the European Cup, should United qualify, in March.

A senior figure at the club admitted privately yesterday that Ferguson would be asked if he wanted to sell Cole now to Everton, but a more likely scenario — given the close relationship between the clubs — is that Royle will be offered first refusal should the player become available in December.

Royle will then still have the funds to meet United's asking price of around £5 million, even though he is likely to act in the short term to resolve his forward line problems. Everton had a £2 million bid for Live Rösler, of Manchester City, rejected last weekend.

The beleaguered City board indicated yesterday, however, that, if the offer was increased to £3 million, it would accept. Royle will table such a bid on his return to Merseyside today, with the deal likely to be completed by the weekend. The prospect remains of Cole making a similar journey from Manchester by the turn of the year.

Frankie fever spreads to high places

By Richard Evans
RACING CORRESPONDENT

THE QUEEN let it be known yesterday that she was as thrilled as everyone else in the land, John Major will pass on his congratulations in person at 10 Downing Street on Thursday, and Ascot is already thinking how it can best commemorate the sporting achievement of the year.

Frankie Dettori fever, it would appear, knows no bounds and, just to keep the pot boiling, the charismatic jockey is set to ride his hundredth winner of the season at Newmarket today after donning the royal silks and moving to 99 with Sabina at

Bath yesterday. However, the worldwide fame that has flowed from riding the winners of all seven races at Ascot on Saturday — yesterday he was made joint-favourite with Steve Redgrave and Damon Hill to be voted BBC sports personality of the year — will not go to his head. He has more important things on his mind, such as which horse will be ride in the Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe on Sunday?

A year ago, after triumphing on Lamentarra, he won over the hearts of French racegoers with a trademark leap from the saddle in the winner's enclosure at Longchamp. For much of this summer, he has been dream-

ing of a repeat performance from the back of Classic Cliché, the winner of the Ascot Gold Cup.

The horse possesses all the right qualities, but has been disappointing on the gallops of late and, yesterday, Ladbrokes removed the four-year-olds from the betting in the belief that he would not run.

By last night, the bookmakers were anticipating that Dettori would partner Swain, trained by André Fabre and owned by Sheikh Mohammed, and, significantly, Swain's price was cut from 6-1 to 9-2 by Ladbrokes.

In contrast to the glamour of the Arc weekend in Paris

and an invitation to a Downing Street reception hosted by the Prime Minister on Thursday, Dettori enjoyed a relatively quiet day at Bath yesterday. However, his first-race victory afforded an opportunity for the jockey's historic achievement to be made known. "She was just as thrilled as everybody else," Lord Carnarvon, the Queen's racing manager, reported.

Ascot racecourse is already considering the best way to commemorate Dettori's world record. A statue or a race named in his honour are two possibilities.

Ascot racecourse is already considering the best way to commemorate Dettori's world record. A statue or a race named in his honour are two possibilities.

Arc doubt, page 45

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